University of Alberta

A Study of A District Mentorship Program

by

Alexandria Sawchuk ©

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that contribute to establishing a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers. The main participants in this study were a group of beginning teachers or proteges and their mentors or veteran teachers who were involved in a Mentorship Program in its first year of operation within a large urban school district. Several school principals were also included in the research.

The data were gathered by surveying the participants at the beginning and at the end of the program. A small sample of proteges, mentors and principals were interviewed midway through the program. The data were analyzed for consistency of responses on the perceived value of mentorship in preparing beginning teachers for their role as classroom teachers.

The major finding of this study was that there was a high degree of satisfaction with the Mentorship Program. Beginning teachers felt that the Mentorship Program was valued mostly for the support provided by mentors to their proteges. This support was perceived by proteges and mentors to be significant in helping proteges develop their skills in teaching. The most important feature of the Mentorship Program was that proteges could ask for assistance in a climate that encouraged collaboration and reflection in teaching. Asking questions and seeking clarification about the many aspects of teaching was considered the norm rather than a sign of weakness. This study provides the foundation for further research in this area.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> Mentoring is a slippery concept. Most people think of a mentor as a person, usually older and more experienced, who is able and willing to help a protege get where he or she wants to go… the mentor clears the way, gives some travel tips, and smoothes the bumps. Occasionally the mentor helps the protege develop the necessary skills to navigate an especially difficult turn in the road, but by and large, the mentor concentrates on providing a map and fixing the road rather than on developing the traveler (Daloz, 1986, p. ix).

Beginning teachers face a daunting task as they begin their work in classrooms. The reality is that even the most effective teacher education programs often leave beginning teachers unprepared for the challenges of their first teaching assignment. The learning curve is very steep during the first year in a classroom. The support of a cooperating teacher is no longer there. The theories that seemed sensible and relatively easy to understand in university and college courses do not always apply to the new teacher's situation. Professors on campuses are no longer readily accessible for advice. The new setting in the school may not be as hospitable as first envisioned by the beginning teacher. Everyone appears to be busy all the time. The concerns of a beginning teacher may seem trivial in the context of a school brimming with activity and demands that are never ending. Who can a beginning teacher turn to for help in overcoming the major hurdles, not to mention getting advice on the seemingly insignificant details that entail the work of a teacher? Who do you ask when your concerns seem less of a priority in the overall scheme of what transpires in a school in the course of a day? Delgado (1999) states that we should not underrate the shock new teachers experience. "It's real, and we need to deal with it" (p. 27).

To address some of these problems, mentoring programs have been established to attempt to meet the needs of teachers new to the teaching profession. There is a growing number of examples in the literature on mentoring to provide evidence that such programs benefit beginning teachers. Hersh, Stroot, and Snyder (1995) describe the experiences of educators at Wilmington College in Ohio to illustrate how mentoring could meet the needs of rural entry-year teachers. The University of Wisconsin, North Carolina State University, and the Connecticut State Department of Education have helped to institute exemplary mentorship programs (Ganser, 1994; North Carolina State University, 1992; Connecticut State Department of Education, 1995). Each of these programs was established to provide sustained support to new teachers in an organized manner. Formalized support programs for beginning teachers have rushed onto the educational landscape during the past decade (Reiman, Head, & Sprinthall, 1992). They have been initiated by education faculties at universities, departments of education, teacher associations and school districts, often in collaboration with each other.

Most mentorship programs typically match beginning teachers with experienced teachers. The experienced teachers provide support and assistance to their new colleagues. The mentorship programs are generally designed to provide support, acculturation and professional growth opportunities for beginning teachers (Ganser, 1994). This is done by providing a forum for both beginning teachers and experienced teachers to meet formally at regular intervals for inservice sessions as well as informally in their work setting on an ongoing basis (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997).

Feedback from participants of mentorship programs provides evidence that beginning teachers believed that they improved in their ability to provide better instruction and use more effective management techniques as a result of participating in such programs (Huling-Austin, 1992; Scott & Compton, 1995). Veteran teachers reported that they experienced a renewed confidence and sense of professionalism due to the programs (Ganser, 1996). Beginning teachers appreciated the opportunity to form alliances and friendships with other beginning teachers. Research indicated that new teachers felt that one of the reasons the programs were so successful is that they had opportunities to meet and learn from other beginning teachers as well as their mentors (Hersh et al., 1995).

Background to the Problem

Research on the experiences of teachers in their first five years of teaching has shed some light on the harrowing experiences of beginning teachers. Approximately 20 percent of these teachers leave the teaching profession within the first three years of entering teaching and 40 per cent after seven years of teaching (Huling-Austin, 1989). Schlechty and Vance (1981) as well as Gonzales and Sosa (1993) found that many of those who leave are our best and brightest teachers; however, those teachers who are involved in a mentoring program are more inclined to stay in teaching. In a four year retrospective study, Odell and Ferraro (1992) found that only four per cent of those teachers who were mentored during their first year of teaching left the profession each year. That figure more closely reflects the overall annual rate of teachers leaving the profession (Feistrizer, 1990).

Faced with such a high rate of attrition during the first few years of teaching, and aware of the challenges faced by beginning teachers, policy-makers began to implement on-site support and assistance programs for new teachers (Little, 1990). Since the early 1980's, when mentoring first burst onto the teaching landscape as a broad movement aimed at improving education, over 30 states in the United States have mandated some form of mentored support for beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). Programs in Canada are not as widespread but are being initiated in an increasing number of school districts (Scott & Compton, 1995; Alberta Teachers Association, 1997).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to establishing a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers in one school district. This study examines the experiences of beginning teachers (proteges) and experienced teachers (mentors) in a Mentorship Program in a large urban school district in Alberta over the course of a school year. For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of mentor and protege apply:

> Mentor – "one who fosters growth in professional practice and nurtures the maturation and acculturation of a younger or newer member of the profession; an experienced or trusted advisor" (Alberta Teachers Association, 1997, p.1).
>
> Protege – a teacher beginning the first year of a continuous contract with this school district "who is mentored by another" (Alberta Teachers Association, 1997, p.1). A continuous contract is a term used for determining that a teacher has permanent employment with the district.

Delimitations of the Study

The study will be delimited to:

1. Teachers, principals and schools in a large urban Alberta school district;
2. Teachers and principals selected for the study.

Limitations of the Study

1. The limited opinions obtained from the use of surveys and interviews could bias the results.
2. It is possible that the level of school experiences and variations in the levels of participation used in the construction of the surveys and organization of the interviews do not cover the full range of possibilities. Thus the responses may not accurately reflect the perceptions and experiences of the respondents.
3. The study is limited by other factors that cannot be readily measured. They include:
    a) the influence of school and teaching climate on respondents;
    b) other professional development programs that respondents participated in during the study.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the responses given by the teachers and principals are true indicators of their perceptions.

Research Questions

The main research question of the study is: *What factors contribute to establishing a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers in one school district?*

Other related questions that are pertinent to this study include:

1. How is mentorship perceived by the proteges?
2. How is mentorship perceived by the mentors?
3. What is the role of school administration in the district Mentorship Program?
4. Is mentorship viewed differently at different instructional levels: elementary and secondary schools?
5. What environmental or contextual circumstances are necessary to support the Mentorship Program?
6. What are the professional development needs in the Mentorship Program?
7. What are the benefits of the Mentorship Program?
8. What are the drawbacks of the Mentorship Program?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons. The research literature is replete with examples of the challenges beginning teachers face as they enter teaching. Many capable, talented teachers leave the teaching profession early in their careers as a result of the frustrations they encounter in their first experiences in classrooms. It is incumbent upon the teaching profession to recognize this dilemma and take steps to help new teachers in their transition from student teacher to teacher. This study will provide a description of one mentoring program that other jurisdictions may find useful as they launch their own programs. The results of this study will provide an additional source of information about the experiences of beginning teachers in a Mentorship Program. The findings will contribute to the understanding of what support beginning teachers feel they need in the early stages of their teaching experience. It will also shed light on the possibilities for professional development for mentors. Finally, the information gathered from this study will provide direction for further study needed in this area to broaden the knowledge of how to more effectively initiate beginning teachers into the teaching profession.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Providing a Conceptual Framework for the Notion of Mentoring

> The original Mentor appears in *The Odyssey* as an old and trusted friend of Odysseus. He is appointed to look after the estate and, more to the point, Odysseus's son, Telemakhos. It is in Mentor's form that Athena, goddess of wisdom, speaks at critical times throughout the epic. Thus, Mentor is both male and female, mortal and immortal – an androgynous demigod, half here, half there. Wisdom personified. (Daloz, 1986, p.19)

Mentoring in education is the practice of collegial collaboration between an experienced teacher and an inexperienced teacher. In many jurisdictions and teacher preparation programs, projects and initiatives are in place for providing formalized support programs for beginning teachers.

These programs grew out of the frustration faced by beginning teachers as they struggled to meet the taxing responsibilities of their first teaching jobs. Despite four years of teacher training, the classroom experiences of novice teachers began to reveal that "even the most effective pre-service program cannot fully prepare the new teacher for her first assignment" (Hersh et al., 1995, p. 31). Even after expanded field experiences, teaching is still primarily learned on the job (National Evaluation Systems, 1997).

Mentorship programs provide an interim step to bridge the gap between teacher education programs and experience. They are designed to reflect the needs of beginning teachers as a whole yet be responsive to the particular needs of individual school districts. Bey and Holmes (1992) report that, in a survey of 1007 teachers conducted in the United States in 1991, 46 percent of the teachers felt that having an experienced teacher as a mentor in their first year of teaching would have been most helpful in preparing them to be more effective first-year teachers. The "need, potential and positive impact of mentoring programs during the beginning phase of a teaching career are well documented" (Wolfe, 1992, p. 10).

Much has been written about the value of mentoring programs. One of the most comprehensive treatments of the subject is represented in the adoption of the following 'principles of mentoring' by the Association of Teacher Educators at their annual conference in 1991:

The Mentoring Process

1. Mentoring is a complex process and function.
2. Mentoring involves support, assistance, and guidance, but not evaluation of the protege.
3. Mentoring requires time and communication.
4. Mentoring should facilitate self-reliance in proteges.

Mentoring Programs

5. Mentoring is bigger than induction.
6. Mentoring programs should involve local school districts in collaboration with institutions of higher education, state departments of education, and teachers' bargaining groups.
7. The structure of mentoring programs should be consistent with school district goals.
8. Mentoring programs should be evaluated.

Selection and Preparation of Mentors

9. Mentors should be selected based upon identified criteria.
10. Mentors should be prepared (trained) and offered incentives for their work (Huling-Austin, 1992).

The whole concept of mentoring implies providing beginning teachers with something more than just an induction that involves a tour around the school, a parking spot, a set of classroom keys and a handshake. It involves a commitment to introduce the beginning teacher to the world of teaching with a full spectrum support system in place.

Issues in the Mentoring Process

Mentoring programs for beginning teachers are highly complex and situational. Giebelhaus and Bendixon-Noe (1997) report that despite potential advantages for both mentor and protege, the effective widespread use of mentoring in beginning teacher induction is limited by problematic issues related to the lack of definition of mentoring, mentor training, and selection of effective mentors. Janas (1996) found that staff development is crucial in creating successful mentoring relationships in schools and districts. The four major tasks for staff developers when creating programs for mentors are: selecting and training mentors, matching mentors with proteges, setting goals and expectations, and establishing the program. In reporting a study of 24 teachers, Ganser (1996) discussed the benefits of mentoring as well as the obstacles to mentoring. The results of that study indicated that mentoring is valuable, even when it occurs under less than ideal circumstances.

One of the biggest challenges to effective mentoring programs revolves around creating time for mentoring to occur. Some school districts release mentor teachers from some or all of their classroom responsibilities while others expect mentors to combine mentoring with full-time teaching. Retired teachers are sometimes hired to act as mentors as well. Although there are advantages to having a practicing mentor on-site, it is even more important to focus on creating optimal conditions rather than trying to make optimal matches (Tauer, 1995).

Marchant (1996) points out that better links need to be established between teacher preparation institutions and the world of practice in teaching. Such collaboration would lead to better skill training for mentors. Better-trained teacher mentors would have a positive impact on beginning teachers as well as the teaching profession as a whole. In addition, educational research might become more accessible to schools and mentors. This would increase the possibility of research affecting educational policy in the future. That, in itself, is a laudable goal.

Establishing a Mentorship Program: Developing a Rationale

Developing an effective mentorship program depends on a number of important factors. The most important of these factors is establishing a rationale for the program. The rationale serves as a rallying point to bring the participants together for a common cause. Heller and Sindelar (1991) suggest that conducting a needs assessment helps to identify the needs of both mentors and proteges and serves to give direction for developing the rationale. There is a greater chance that program participants will be more dedicated and involved if they have provided input into the program and they perceive that their opinions are valued.

Selection of Mentors

The next stage involves the selection of mentors. The careful selection of veteran teachers to serve as mentors is critical to the success of a mentorship program. Ganser (1992) states that situational factors often contribute to the selection process. These include availability of prospective mentors at particular grade levels or in the appropriate content and special education program as well as scheduling constraints. Although such considerations are important, mentors should be selected because they demonstrate skills and attributes that are reflective of excellent practitioners.

Experienced teachers have developed teaching competencies that allow them to provide an appropriate environment for helping beginning teachers develop similar skills. Wilson and Ireton (1996) conducted a study to determine the competencies or behaviours perceived by practicing mentor teachers as being most significant in cultivating desirable teacher habits within interns or beginning teachers. Ganser (1992) and Odell (1987) refer to some basic principles that should serve to guide the selection of mentors. They state that the following selection criteria should be kept in mind while selecting mentors:

- teachers who are willing to serve as mentors and are enthusiastic about working with a beginning teacher
- teachers who have demonstrated excellence in teaching
- teachers who are well organized, flexible and have a positive attitude

- teachers who are professionally growth-oriented and who have demonstrated leadership skills
- teachers who are sensitive to the viewpoint of others
- teachers who have excellent social and public relations skills
- teachers who demonstrate excellence in working with adults.

Experienced teachers often receive a boost in morale and feel rejuvenated after becoming mentors. While this is indeed an added benefit of the mentoring experience, Ganser (1992) cautions that a teacher should not be chosen to act as mentor for the purpose of giving the teacher "a boost" or getting the teacher "out of a rut." First and foremost, teachers should be asked to serve as mentors because they demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that reflect exemplary teaching. The following is one mentor's understanding of the criteria for selecting mentors:

> Ability to show leadership and demonstrate qualities of good teaching for beginning teachers to follow; ability to pass on these skills and qualities; diversity of curricular base expertise. (Scott & Compton, 1995, Appendix A).

Role Definitions

Clarifying what is expected of participants is an important part of establishing clear lines of communication between everyone involved in a mentorship program (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997). The role of the mentor is to advise new teachers about school culture, role-appropriate behaviour, curriculum and teaching methods and materials.

Heller and Sindelar (1991) suggest that mentor roles might include the following:

- to increase the protege's instructional competence
- to increase the protege's self-confidence
- to be a resource to the protege in the area of discipline, classroom management, curriculum, and lesson planning
- to be a resource to the protege in the areas of school policy, procedures, and routines, and
- to be a friend.

Although it is critical to ensure that mentors understand their role, Huling-Austin (1990) cautions that mentors also need to realize that their role cannot always be totally defined in advance. She contends that mentors have to consider the needs and characteristics of their proteges, the teaching context and the overall teacher induction program in order to become effective mentors. Essentially, mentoring involves building a relationship between two individuals, in which the wiser, more experienced teaches a less knowledgeable individual (Szmulas, 1999).

The expectations of proteges are less well defined in the literature but the hope is that proteges will benefit from the experience of having a mentor and a strong support system during the formative years of their teaching experience. The Alberta Teachers' Association (1997) refers to a number of understandings that form the key principles of a protege's role in a monograph prepared for mentorship program participants in Red Deer, Alberta. It is expected that, as a result of participating in a mentorship program, proteges have better opportunities to improve teaching performance, learn better observation skills, develop analytic strategies in teaching, become more reflective about the impact of their teaching style as well as learn the value of collaboration early in their teaching career.

Scott and Compton (1995) reported that beginning teachers in a teacher induction program in New Brunswick described their role in the program in the following ways:

> My role as a beginning teacher has been to be an active participant – open to suggestions as well as sharing ideas of my own.
>
> My role is to target areas where I need help, to approach my mentor when I need help or advice, to be open to suggestions.
>
> To learn as much as I can from colleagues…
>
> A "student" who has a great deal to learn from my mentor and other teachers (Appendix B).

Professional Development for Mentors

A mentorship program has been described as one that "has some degree of systematic and sustained assistance and not merely …a series of orientation meetings…" (Huling-Austin, 1990, p. 536). It has a focus and is based on meeting the goals of the program as articulated in the rationale. It is implemented over a period of time, usually over the course of the school year.

Wolfe (1992) cautions against simply "naming" mentors as if they are the cast in a play. "Experienced and beginning teachers alike can be unwitting participants in a 'Cinderella Syndrome,' whereby the godmother-mentor waves a wand to sprinkle the magic of experience and survival over the protege" (p. 103). Ganser (1996) states that even exemplary teachers need special knowledge and skills to become effective mentors.

Mentors need to gain an awareness of the multi-faceted nature of mentoring. They need to develop expertise in working with peers who are fully qualified teachers but lack the broad range of experiences characteristic of veteran teachers. Professional development for mentors involves examining how adults learn, interpersonal skills, coaching and modeling, non-evaluative styles of supervision, needs of beginning teachers and the intricacies of the mentoring process (Wolfe, 1992). Built on such a strong theoretical and practical foundation, mentoring moves from being a purely intuitive process to a more rational process that incorporates thoughtful reflection (North Carolina State University, 1992).

Ideally, mentors should be selected in the spring and matched with their proteges. Heller and Sindelar (1991) suggest that mentors need to attend a full day training session prior to the beginning of the school year. This should include an overview of the characteristics of a beginning teacher, a discussion of mentor roles and responsibilities as defined by the district, guidelines for classroom visitations between mentors and proteges, a review of research on effective instruction, review of the stages of the mentor relationship and how long that relationship will last, and a clarification of the evaluation role of the mentor. Following this, mentors and proteges could meet at a luncheon or other social setting prior to the first day of teaching.

Mentors should be supplied with a handbook that describes the principles upon which the mentorship program is based along with other pertinent information such as lists of names of program participants and other information peculiar to each district and mentorship program. Following this, there needs to be a plan in place that outlines what other training will take place during the rest of the school year. Some districts hold mini-conferences or organize dates and times when mentors and proteges can meet as cohort groups to learn new skills, share experiences, refine practices and discuss issues of mutual concern (Wagner, 1995).

These opportunities for networking are essential in the development of a district perspective and to build collegial relationships amongst members of the large group of mentors and proteges. Mid-year sessions for de-briefing can be very beneficial to help re-focus on goals or to respond to contingencies as they occur. Establishing meeting times early in the year ensures that participants will meet periodically and helps to build a sense of camaraderie. A year-end session combined with a celebration is another feature of mentorship programs. Throughout the program, the critical element is the degree to which participants engage in reflection about their own teaching. As with all teacher education and development, improving the conditions for student learning is central to the purpose of having a mentorship program in the first place (Ganser, 1995; Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997).

Fostering the Mentoring Relationship

Mentors and their schools play a critical role in the initiation of beginning teachers. First impressions in teaching are just as powerful as in other professions. Mentors have the potential to have a significant impact on each new generation of teachers. They have been given many titles in the literature to reflect the effect they have on beginning teachers. They have been referred to as buddy, helping or support teacher, master teacher, advisor, coach, guide, trusted colleague among a range of terms to describe their role in the mentoring process (Head, 1992; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988).

Hardcastle (1988) found that proteges were attracted to mentors who had integrity and who were wise, caring and committed to their professions. Furthermore, they exuded warmth and compassion and were willing to help proteges discover their way through the maze of teaching by being supportive. They understood the importance of confidentiality in a mentoring relationship and worked hard to build a peer support network for their proteges (Whitebook & Bellm, 1996). They had high standards for their own performance and were viewed as leaders amongst teachers.

Mentoring requires a time commitment and an ability to communicate effectively (Huling-Austin, 1992). Mentors and proteges need to establish patterns of interaction that work for them in their particular setting. Working on developing skills in long and short term planning, effective classroom instruction, paperwork management, and meeting with parents are just some of the many areas in which proteges need assistance. Head, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1992) elaborate on the complexity of mentoring and how it needs to be viewed as a school priority well worth the time it takes to implement.

Stupiansky (1992) cautions mentorship program organizers to impress upon mentors that they need to play the role of mentor, not evaluator. The relationship between mentor and protege does not hold as much potential for growth in the protege if the mentor is required to do a performance evaluation of the protege. That role belongs to the school administrator.

School administrators also play a pivotal role in fostering a team approach to the notion of mentoring. Krupp (1985) found that a large majority of beginning teachers viewed their school principal as a mentor. At the same time, all staff members are potential mentors. The extent to which they participate varies with the circumstances in each school. School administrators have the power to lead in this exciting venture. Their enthusiasm and support of mentoring can be the major catalyst in a school joining or launching a mentorship program. How they organize timetables, create opportunities or expend resources all have a tremendous effect on the success of a mentoring program. Bey (1990) documents this poignantly in a letter written by Pauline, a beginning teacher, who resigns during her first year of teaching in the midst of a non-supportive school climate.

In a study by Hersch et al. (1995) in Wilmington, Ohio, principals reported that they were involved in working with mentors. They were aware of how the program was operating and indicated that they noted differences between entry year teachers in the program and other first year teachers they had worked with. The teachers in the program seemed more relaxed with the evaluation process, they fit in quicker, they were better informed, and took less of the principal's time (Hersh et al. p. 35).

Developing Coaching Skills

One of the critical factors influencing the success of a mentor-protege relationship is the ability of the mentor to be an effective coach. The act of one adult coaching another requires sensitivity and an understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal communication. Gold (1992) outlines the importance of meeting teachers at their area of need. Mentors need to develop the skills of helping beginning teachers recognize their own strengths. This requires providing the psychological support necessary for a beginning teacher to become more self-confident and self-reliant. Huling-Austin (1990) encourages mentors to offer help rather than wait for beginning teachers to ask for it.

The mentor who initiates the act of helping is more likely to lay a stronger foundation for the beginning teacher to feel comfortable in requesting assistance (Little, 1990).

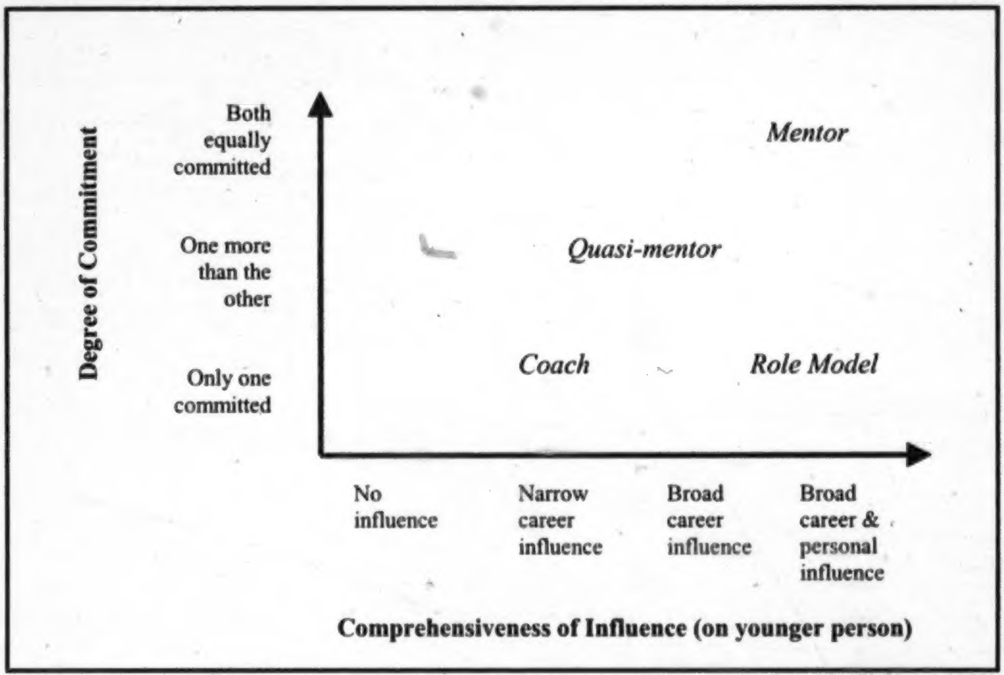
The challenge of mentors is to develop communicative ability in articulating their helping messages in ways that facilitate growth in beginning teachers. Beginning teachers are more apt to listen and learn if the coaching is carried out in a spirit of collegiality and is based on a solid understanding of personal and psychological development (Gold, 1992). What a beginning teacher learns from a mentor depends as much on what they do together as it does on the affective quality of their relationship (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). "Relating to people in a warm, friendly, caring manner is at the crux of sustaining a mentoring relationship" (Bey, 1990, p. 61).

Part of the coaching function entails encouraging proteges to expand their range of contacts and thus increase their opportunities to learn from life experiences, events, and other mentoring influences. Darling (1985) refers to this process as developing a mentoring mosaic. By guiding proteges to be alert for other areas in their lives in which they can receive mentoring, mentors lessen the tendency for proteges to become over-reliant on one mentor. They also help proteges to become more autonomous while, at the same time, learning to collaborate with other teachers and individuals that will become additional sources of strength and inspiration for them.

The mentoring experience can have a profound effect on the entire teaching career of beginning teachers. It has the potential to be one of the most powerful influences that shapes the teaching practices of beginning teachers. It should not be underestimated in terms of its potency for infusing quality, commitment, and dedication to the teaching profession. Mentors have a brief window of opportunity to make an enormous impact on the teaching practices of their proteges by being exemplary coaches. Clawson (1980) graphically portrayed the extent to which mentoring involves both function and process in the model he developed shown in Figure 1. By accepting the challenge of being mentors, experienced teachers perform an important function. How they approach that task and the intensity of their commitment to a beginning teacher helps to determine the success of the mentoring process. The more committed a mentor is, the greater the possibility for a protege to learn the skills that are associated with good teaching. Mentors are in a unique position to make a positive difference in the formative years of a protege's teaching career.

Little (1990) reinforces this belief by stating that mentoring programs are only as effective as the effort put into them by their participants. It is incumbent for mentors to fully understand their roles and act accordingly. In doing so, they maximize the positive impact of mentorship programs. To neglect to do so jeopardizes the potential for beginning teachers to understand the ramifications of teaching in its entirety. The hazard in the latter scenario is that too many beginning teachers do not stay in teaching long enough to learn about the true joy of teaching.

Figure 1: Two Dimensions Which Identify the Mentor-Protege Relationship


Degree of Commitment
Both equally committed
One more than the other
Only one committed
Mentor
Quasi-mentor
Coach
Role Model
No influence
Narrow career influence
Broad career influence
Broad career & personal influence
Comprehensiveness of Influence (on younger person)

(Clawson, 1980)

Building a Climate for Mentoring

Teachers mentoring each other is an example of the teaching profession at its best. It is teachers helping each other do a better job of teaching. Perhaps the greatest incentive for beginning a mentoring program may be in its potential for improving student achievement (Schmoker, 1996). Colleagues who collaborate with each other break down the isolation of teaching. Heller and Sindelar (1991) indicate that as mentoring programs expand, the resultant networking between teachers leads to an ever-expanding pool of ideas.

It is this climate of cooperation between educators that is key to a vibrant, effective teaching force. Teachers who value exchanging ideas with each other engage in a form of mentoring. When two or more teachers share ideas, each plays the role of mentor and protege at different times and to different degrees (Haring-Hidore, 1987). By building a repertoire of teaching strategies and techniques, both new and experienced teachers are better able to help all students succeed in school (Wasley, 1999).

Mentoring beginning teachers is just an extension of what good teachers do in good schools all the time. The reason for formalizing the concept is to ensure that it occurs consistently. New teachers tend to find mentors informally; "however, it is better to have a good mentor program in place to promote and nurture excellent teaching, good classroom management, adherence to school rules and regulations, and a positive attitude" (Heller & Sindelar, 1991, p. 9). A mentorship program can have a very positive effect on school climate. Krupp (1987) found that the positive self esteem resulting from mentoring experiences improved school climate. The spirit of mentoring is contagious and fosters innovation. The overall benefit of a mentorship program goes far beyond its mandate of helping beginning teachers. Its most valuable contribution to education might very well be that better trained and better-motivated teachers help students become more successful learners.

Incorporating a Mentorship Review Component

As with any new program it is necessary to include an evaluation component. This needs to be done throughout the program. It is particularly important at the inception of the program. Since evaluation is an integral part of program management, plans for gathering and utilizing evaluation data should be done at the outset of the program (Wolfe, 1992). Heller and Sindelar (1991) recommend obtaining feedback from program participants several times during the school year. This can be done after the first session to determine the needs of mentors and proteges for the duration of the year. Subsequently, there is a need for de-briefing at the midpoint as well as conducting a final evaluation that involves mentors, proteges, school administrators and training staff at the end of the year. The results should be presented in a formal written report. Incorporating a program evaluation facilitates the examination of the costs and benefits of the program. Having reliable data available can provide evidence to continue the program, point to ways to improve the program or indeed to discontinue it.

Mentoring as a Form of Staff Development

Since mentoring involves training and ongoing professional development for both mentors and proteges, it is often viewed as a component of staff development. The topics pertinent to the training of mentors are directly related to the concepts generally associated with good teaching. The benefits of mentor training tend to have a positive impact on other staff in the school where a mentorship program is in existence. As new ideas are introduced to the school through the program, they help to generate discussion about teaching in general. The result is often increased reflection about teaching and improved practice.

Mentoring is being increasingly viewed as an integral aspect of staff development for experienced teachers as well as for beginning teachers (Ganser, 1996; Wilson & Ireton, 1996). Mentoring programs reflect an understanding that "professional development efforts must be directed at experienced as well as entry-level personnel and must reward people for their efforts to further develop their skills" (Whitebook & Bellm, 1996, p. 60). Practically speaking, mentoring programs show prospective employees the profession's commitment to beginning teachers and furnish veteran teachers with opportunities for their own professional development (Ganser, 1996). Experienced teachers who are encouraged to assume complex new helping roles grow personally and professionally (Reiman et al.1992).

Some jurisdictions have created incentives for experienced teachers to gain university credit while training as mentors (Reiman et al. 1992). Still other jurisdictions provide release time, financial compensation, other professional development opportunities, and recognition for participation in mentorship programs. A number of jurisdictions have mandated mentoring programs. The mentoring process, informal or formal, is a component of professional development programs for beginning and experienced teachers.

Linking Teacher Education and Mentorship Programs

The first step in the process of teacher education is to focus on helping emerging teachers gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to assume the role of a teacher. Wasley (1999) suggests that teacher education institutions and school districts need to examine more carefully what constitutes teacher preparation. This would help to solve some of the problems that cause many beginning teachers to leave the profession before they have had an adequate opportunity to develop the expertise to manage their own classrooms. Teacher education needs to include a strong component in the acquisition of practical teaching skills. The theoretical constructs of teaching need to be integrated within a repertoire that helps beginning teachers understand the exigencies of everyday teaching. Wasley (1999) says new teachers need help with "planning for a week, a month and a year; moving kids from one activity to the next; incorporating children with disabilities or language differences; writing newsletters to parents from a culture different from the teacher's; and focusing lessons on skill acquisition and content knowledge" (p. 12). This would make teacher preparation more immediate and focused on the tasks that often overwhelm beginning teachers even though they have a very good theoretical understanding of the task of teaching.

Moreover, school-university partnerships that support the professional development of mentors, teacher candidates and beginning teachers can provide an important link between pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher support. Such partnerships are based on a philosophy that values and fosters cooperation between teacher education institutions and school districts. The "Early Career Teacher Mentoring Program" in Oregon is an example of a state wide initiative in providing new teachers in their first three years of teaching with a mentor in the areas of content and pedagogy for science and mathematics instruction. It is implemented jointly by the Oregon Department of Education and the Mathematics and Science Specialist Councils. Funding is provided by the National Science Foundation on a five-year project basis. The aim of the program is to provide a strong start for new mathematics and science teachers in Oregon.

The state of Kentucky has taken the notion of working collaboratively with colleagues a step further. Legislation enacted in 1985 required the establishment of a collegial team to initiate beginning teachers into the profession and to establish a culture of continual growth. The Kentucky Teacher Internship Program provides assistance to beginning teachers using a team approach. The team consists of a mentor teacher, a university representative, and the school principal (Brennan, Thames, & Roberts, 1999). By creating a cohort of experienced teachers working with a beginning teacher, this program helps to break down what Huling-Austin (1992) refers to as the barriers of isolation in teaching.

The California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers is a state-wide program focusing on mentoring relationships, new teaching standards, and formative assessment tools (Olebe, Jackson, & Danielson, 1999). The program was created to help recruit and retain beginning teachers as well as to foster improved teaching quality standards. The hope behind this initiative and others like it is to help beginning teachers develop skills in teaching by bridging the gap between university professional preparation and the challenges of classroom teaching.

School districts, teacher associations and colleges of education need to develop mentoring programs in collaboration with each other (Wasley, 1999). Too often, the beginning teacher's needs may be inadvertently overlooked as each segment of this triad fulfills its own mandate. The result is a newly hired teacher graduate who has sound theoretical knowledge but little practical skill. The steps for teacher education, teacher induction through mentorship during the first few years of teaching and continuous learning for the duration of a teaching career need to be part of a continuum that is supported by teacher associations, school districts and provincial or state authorities.

Helping Beginning Teachers Learn How to Teach

How beginning teachers learn to teach is an important topic for consideration in the overall plan of mentoring beginning teachers. Research gathered at Southwest Texas State University on the process of learning to teach suggests that certain practices are more apt to lead to building a strong repertoire of skills in teaching. In addition to providing beginning teachers with opportunities to work in cohort groups at their schools, observe their mentors and be observed by their mentors, Huling-Austin (1992) encourages mentor teachers to explain the organization of their thinking in great detail to beginning teachers. With their limited knowledge of how to teach, beginning teachers need in depth explanations to help them make inferences about students and classroom practices.

Experienced teachers have had an opportunity to develop expertise through a process of building an understanding of teaching over a period of time. Livingston and Borko (1989) describe this accumulation of knowledge as a framework of complex cognitive skills or schema. Expert teachers have developed integrated stores of facts, principles, and experiences or cognitive schemata to use in their teaching. In mentoring programs, there needs to be an understanding of how to help beginning teachers develop such expertise. One way to foster the development of expertise is to limit the number of teaching preparations in different subject areas. More opportunities to repeat and fine tune instructional strategies increases the likelihood that beginning teachers can develop the cognitive schemata needed to understand the complexity of both process and content in teaching.

Summary

The purpose of mentoring programs is to guide beginning teachers into the profession. Although this is the primary function of mentoring, the results of a study of 19 mentors and proteges in Barrington, Rhode Island in 1991 suggest that successful mentoring is as beneficial to mentors as it is to proteges. In the process of providing mentorship, mentors have the opportunity to re-think their classroom practices and teach differently as a result of the ideas shared by their proteges. Proteges may introduce mentors to new views on curriculum and instruction and encourage them to try new teaching approaches (Wollman-Bonilla, 1997).

Ganser (1996) states that beginning teacher programs address at least four important purposes: (1) improving the performance of new teachers, (2) encouraging promising new teachers to stay in the field, (3) promoting their personal and professional well-being, and (4) satisfying mandated induction and certification requirements. As Head et al. (1992) remind us, "mentoring *can* make a difference for teachers, but it needs to be real mentoring complete with its complexity in process and function" (p. 20).

Mentoring beginning teachers should not be viewed as a luxury nor should it be left to serendipity. It needs to be embraced as an accepted practice that is firmly rooted in the tenets of teacher education and teacher collaboration. Just as in business and other professions, mentorship in education needs to be a support to beginning teachers as they launch their teaching careers. The notion of mentoring is based on the belief that beginning teachers and the students they teach are worth the time that experienced educators take to help beginning teachers make learning meaningful for their first students in their first classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

Research Method

Overview of Research Orientations

This chapter contains a description of the Mentorship Program model, and the participants as well as the methodology used to conduct the study. The study took place during the 1998-99 school year. Data were gathered from September 28, 1998 to May 26, 1999. Although this study is based on an interpretive approach to research, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data about the district Mentorship Program and to determine the perceptions of the participants in the study. By incorporating quantitative methods of data collection with qualitative methods, the intention was to establish a deeper understanding of everyone's experiences by asking for their input in more than one manner (Mathison, 1988).

The quantitative aspect was comprised of two surveys that were administered at the beginning and at the end of the Mentorship Program. The surveys were developed on the basis of understandings gained from the literature review about existing mentorship programs (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997; Scott & Compton, 1995; Huling-Austin, 1992, National Evaluation Systems, 1997). Distributing the surveys ensured that all the mentors and proteges in the program were given an opportunity to voice their opinions on what constituted a successful Mentorship Program in the district. The purpose of the surveys was to collect data with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (Babbie, 1990). It allowed the researcher to gather data efficiently by distributing the surveys to all the participants. As well, the method of gathering the data facilitated sharing of the results with the district in a format that reflected "a viable, legitimate methodology that was representative of the entire group surveyed" (Creswell, 1994, p. 10).

Qualitative inquiry was used to shed further light on the experiences of mentors and proteges by focusing on how the experience worked in practice. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that the goal of qualitative research is to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are. Interviews with a sample of the program participants were used to capture participant perceptions of how the Mentorship Program worked on a day to day basis in meeting the needs of beginning teachers. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) indicate that, since interviewers

> ...are interested in how people think about their lives, their experiences and particular situations, they model their interviews after a conversation between two trusting parties rather than on a formal question and answer session between a researcher and a respondent. It is only in this manner that they can capture what is important in the minds of the subjects themselves. (p. 49)

Field notes collected during the participant observation part of the program were also used as part of the qualitative aspect of the study. These were collected during the scheduled professional development activities associated with the Mentorship Program. The information in the field notes provided valuable information on what the participants perceived to be the factors that contributed to a successful Mentorship Program. This information helped in the process of creating the broad themes that defined the parameters of the experiences of the participants in the Mentorship Program. Along with the ideas gathered in the interviews combined with the information emanating from literature review, the added information gleaned from the participant observation contributed to the creation of topics and subtopics around which to organize the writing of the results from the interviews.

In presenting the findings using more than one paradigm, a stronger case can be made in reporting the results (Mathison, 1988). It is the opinion of the researcher that quantitative data often lacks the soul that gives life to human experiences. Similarly, qualitative data on its own can lack generalizability. Mathison (1988) uses the example of ethnographers having to conduct surveys to corroborate observational data. Due to the small number of participants interviewed in the study, it would have been difficult to determine whether the Mentorship Program was considered successful based upon the interviews alone. As noted by Lancy (1993), "it is sometimes necessary to determine if the views obtained from a small number of subjects interviewed is consistent, in the main, with the views of a larger group to which the informants belong" (p. 12).

A more comprehensive approach was intended to be the strength of this study. By utilizing triangulation as a research strategy, the intention was to enhance the validity of the research findings (Mathison, 1988). Triangulation as a concept is used to support the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978). It is based on the assumption that possible bias from data sources and methods is neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources and methods (Jick, 1979). Creswell (1994) gives the illustration that "a quantitative study can be supplemented by interviews to elaborate, enhance, or illustrate the results from one method by using another method" (p. 184). Lancey (1993) points out that researchers should make the most efficient use of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms to understand social phenomena.

Although using multiple sources for data collection can be cumbersome and can appear to be an exercise in focusing too much on methodology (Smith & Heshusus, 1986), an attempt was made in this study to ensure that respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences from more than one perspective over a period of time. By asking participants to respond to similar questions in a variety of ways using different data gathering methods, the resulting information can be cross-referenced to determine the points of convergence for the purpose of reporting results. By examining the data from several sources, the patterns that emerge are also more accurate and add perspective to the findings (Creswell, 1994). He explains that one of the purposes of combining methods is to examine overlapping and different facets of a study in order to add scope and breadth and to demonstrate convergence in the results. Therefore, in this study, qualitative and quantitative data collecting procedures were used in order to validate and strengthen the findings.

Description of the Mentorship Program Model Used in the Study

This study was conducted in a large urban school district in Alberta. The school district implemented a Mentorship Program based on a model developed by the Alberta Teachers' Association (1997). At the time of the study, the Mentorship Program was in its first year of operation in the district.

The Mentorship Program model developed by the Alberta Teachers' Association (1997) was established to provide support to new teachers in their first year of teaching (see Appendix A). It was based on the idea that first year teachers need the advice, assistance and support of an experienced teacher or mentor. It was also based on the premise that a Mentorship Program helps to initiate beginning teachers into the teaching profession by providing opportunities for collegial sharing and reflective practice

(Huling-Austin, 1992). Furthermore, a formal Mentorship Program was viewed as a vehicle for transmitting school and district culture, encouraging continued teacher growth for both beginning and experienced teachers, and promoting personal and professional well being. It was the belief that, by participating in the Mentorship Program, both proteges and mentors would benefit from professional development aimed at helping them understand their respective roles in the program.

The goals of the Alberta Teachers' Association Mentorship Program model were as follows:

- to enhance the ability of beginning teaches to develop and demonstrate the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard
- to enhance teaching practice and student learning
- to provide experienced teachers with opportunities for professional growth and leadership
- to extend opportunities for collegial sharing and reflective practice
- to promote the professional and personal well being of beginning teachers
- to accelerate the transmission of school and district culture (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997, p. 2).

The roles and responsibilities for all the participants in the Alberta Teachers' Association Mentorship Program were outlined in the Mentorship Program Implementation Guide. The responsibilities of mentors were to:

- encourage and support the acculturation of the protege into the district

- prepare and implement a joint Mentorship Program plan with the protege
- maintain a relationship with the protege consistent with the Code of Professional Conduct
- demonstrate effective teaching strategies
- observe and provide feedback to the protege
- assist the protege in identifying personal strengths and planning for further professional growth
- assist the protege with curriculum and instructional planning.

The responsibilities of proteges were to:

- prepare and implement a joint Mentorship Program plan with the mentor
- maintain a relationship with the mentor consistent with the Code of Professional Conduct.

The responsibilities of principals who had staff involved in the program were to:

- facilitate professional growth planning for the protege and mentor
- provide for common release time for the protege and mentor within either the instructional or non-instructional requirements of the collective agreement on a regular and ongoing basis
- recruit mentors who meet the identified criteria

- arrange costs for release time for the mentor and protege to participate in the program's large group sessions. (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997, p. 3)

The district Mentorship Program in this study was based on similar assumptions. The proteges and mentors were involved in professional development that was aimed at helping them understand and perform their roles. However, the Mentorship Program in this study differed from the original Alberta Teachers' Association model in several ways. One difference was the way a protege was defined. In the Alberta Teachers' Association model, a protege was in his or her first year of teaching. In this study, a protege was defined as a teacher beginning a continuous or permanent contract with the district. A continuous contract was an indication of tenure and defined the conditions of employment. Therefore, a protege could, for example, be in his or her third year of teaching but in the first year of a continuous contract with the district. All of the proteges in this study were teachers in their first five years of teaching, with the majority being first year teachers. Another way the district Mentorship Program was different was that principals were encouraged to facilitate common release time for mentors and proteges but were not required to do so.

Professional Development in the Mentorship Program

During the 1998 - 99 school year, the mentors and proteges participated in the Mentorship Program professional development activities offered by the school district. All program participants were encouraged to attend the two mini-conferences that were organized specifically for Mentorship Program participants as well as the information session at the beginning of the school year and the culminating session near the end of the school year. Funding for this program was shared by the district and The Alberta Teachers' Association. The first session of that school year was held on September 28, 1998 after school. The purpose of this session was to outline the goals of the Mentorship Program and the roles and responsibilities of mentors and proteges in the program. On October 23, 1998 and March 25, 1999, participants received support through two additional scheduled professional development sessions in the form of one day mini-conferences. Funding was provided by the Mentorship program to cover the cost of supply teachers for mentors and proteges who attended the mini-conferences to a maximum of two days for two pairs consisting of a mentor and a protege per school. However, no funding was provided for additional meeting times between mentors and proteges. Informal shared planning times were organized by mentors and proteges in pairs throughout the school year. These sessions were arranged by each pair of mentor and protege and usually occurred after school. In addition, a year-end celebration of the program was scheduled for May 26, 1999 after school. The mentors and proteges received certificates for their participation in the Mentorship Program. They were also asked for their input on the success of the program. The principals of the participating schools were invited to be part of all the district professional development sessions. Participation was encouraged but not mandatory.

The Participants

Throughout the spring and fall of 1998, district personnel asked for the assistance of principals to facilitate in the recruitment of potential mentors who could work with the beginning teachers that had just been offered a continuous contract with the district. In the spring of 1998, all district schools received a letter from the district's central services inviting principals to identify teachers who could participate in a new Mentorship Program if they anticipated having beginning teachers on staff during the following school year. This was followed by an information session for teachers who were interested in participating as well as their principals. The session was held after school. District personnel gave a brief overview of the Mentorship Program that was being planned for the fall of 1998.

A second letter was sent to principals in September of 1998 to attract more potential mentors for the Mentorship Program. As a result of this cooperation between the district central services and the schools, district personnel were able to match proteges with mentors. Another information session was held on September 28, 1998. This time it included proteges as well as mentors and principals. During the information session, the proposed Mentorship Program was described to the participants by district staff. They were informed that the Mentorship Program was based on the Alberta Teachers' Association (1997) model and they were asked to participate in this study of the Mentorship Program for beginning teachers on a voluntary basis.

The Mentorship Program involved a group of 39 beginning teachers (proteges) in their first year of a continuous contract who were matched with 39 experienced teachers (mentors). The group of participants was comprised of individuals from all school levels:

elementary, junior high, and senior high school. Twenty-six pairs of mentors and proteges taught in the same school. Thirteen pairs of mentors and proteges taught in different schools.

The Surveys

The surveys provided an opportunity to gauge the initial reactions of mentors and proteges as they embarked upon the Mentorship Program and as they reflected on their experiences near the end of the program. The intent of administering the surveys was to capture the expectations of the participants at the outset as well as to ask for their responses at the end of the school year. The mentors and proteges were asked for their input on how the program was meeting their needs twice during the school year. This was done by distributing an initial survey in October, 1998 and a follow-up survey was distributed in May, 1999 (see Appendices B and C).

The initial survey for mentors and proteges was distributed to all the participants who attended the first mini-conference scheduled for all participants on October 25, 1998. Time was allotted during the general session of first mini-conference for the researcher to administer the initial survey and for participants to complete it. Participants were also invited to send the completed survey to the district office of the Mentorship Program if they required more time to complete the survey. Any Mentorship Program participants who were unable to attend the first mini-conference had their initial surveys mailed to them at their schools. They were asked to return it in the envelope addressed to the district office of the Mentorship Program. A covering letter accompanied each survey (see Appendix G).

The initial survey for mentors consisted of demographic and factual questions that asked participants to identify the grade levels at their school, how long they had been teaching, and how they became involved in the Mentorship Program. Questions relating to the characteristics of mentors were asked in order to ascertain how factors such as years of teaching experience, type and size of school and teaching experiences could potentially affect how helpful they could be to proteges and whether there were any differences that could be attributed to grade levels taught or teaching experiences. The questions relating to the experiences of mentors were created from program guidelines shared at the beginning of the program as well as from the literature that described the experiences of mentors and proteges in programs elsewhere (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997; Scott & Compton, 1995). It also contained questions that focused on the mentors' perceptions of their role in the Mentorship Program, and to what extent they felt the Mentorship Program would help them in their work as mentors and in their own professional development. These questions relating to the growth in skills that proteges had the potential to experience were created from the Alberta Teachers' Association (1997) guidelines as well as from a survey of the literature describing mentor roles and responsibilities from existing programs in other jurisdictions (Heller & Sindelar, 1991; Scott & Compton, 1995).

A rating scale of strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA) was used to measure these perceptions. The use of this rating scale was patterned on a similar survey used in the Alberta Teachers' Association (1997) Mentorship Program evaluation model. Mentors were also asked to rank order five areas of concern they expected beginning teachers would have at the beginning of the school year. This question was likewise patterned on a similar question in the Alberta Teachers' Association (1997) Mentorship Program survey model. Space at the bottom of the survey was left for additional comments or expectations regarding the program. Several open ended questions in the survey allowed respondents to add detail that provided a context for their other responses.

The initial survey for proteges closely resembled the initial survey for mentors described above. It also consisted of questions that asked for demographic and factual data such as the grade level at their school, prior teaching experience, and how they became involved in the Mentorship Program. Proteges were also asked to what extent they felt the Mentorship Program would help them develop certain skills. As in the case of the survey designed for the mentors, a four point scale of strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA) was used to measure proteges' expectations of whether they felt the Mentorship Program would help them develop skills that pertained to teaching. As well there was a question using a rank-ordered scale to rank the areas of greatest concern to proteges from highest to lowest importance (Dillman, 1978; Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997). Respondents were asked an open ended question to elicit their expectations regarding the usefulness of the Mentorship Program. The survey ended with space provided for additional comments. The open ended questions in the survey allowed respondents to add detail that provided a context for their other responses.

The follow-up surveys were distributed during celebration activities on May 25, 1999 (see Appendices D and E). All mentors and proteges in the Mentorship Program were asked to complete a follow-up survey designed to gather their perceptions about the program to that point in time. Again, program participants who were unable to attend that day had their survey mailed to them at their school. A covering letter accompanied each survey (see Appendix J).

In the follow-up survey, mentors were again asked for demographic data such as grade levels of their school, and years of teaching experience. They were again asked to complete a four point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on whether they felt that the Mentorship Program helped proteges acquire skills and whether the program met their expectations for professional development. Several open ended questions were included to discover what they felt was most helpful in the Mentorship Program to them and their proteges, how they felt that they were most helpful to their proteges, and what changes they would recommend to the program. Mentors were asked whether or not they would recommend that the Mentorship Program continue the following year. A space was also provided for any additional comments they wished to make.

The follow-up survey distributed to the proteges contained demographic items similar to those used in the initial survey such as grade levels in their school, and years of teaching prior to being involved in the Mentorship Program. It also asked for the content areas in which they taught. Again, proteges were asked the same questions as in the initial survey such as to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the Mentorship Program helped them gain skills that they could use in their teaching. As well, it included a number of open ended questions about whether the Mentorship Program was helpful to them, what their mentors did that was most helpful, and what changes they would recommend to improve the program. Proteges were also asked whether or not they felt that the program should be continued in the future. The survey ended with space provided for any additional comments.

There was no attempt made to match the respondents' initial and follow-up surveys. Respondents were not asked to identify their gender as gender was not one of the factors addressed in this study.

The Interviews

The interviews were conducted in February and March of 1999 to attempt to better understand the day to day experiences of participants in the Mentorship Program (see Appendix F). According to Patton (1990), the purpose of interviews is to give individuals a forum to express what is in and on their minds. The purpose of conducting the interviews in this study was to gather additional data to complement the data obtained from the survey instruments. They afforded another means to understanding how the participants in the Mentorship Project viewed their experiences and what part of their experiences was the most meaningful to them at this point in time. They also provided an opportunity to gain insight into the natural setting of mentors and proteges. The data from the interviews provided a rich context for understanding the perceived impact of the project on the experiences of beginning teachers.

The participants were interviewed once for approximately one hour at their schools after school or during times of the school day that was convenient for them. All participants were interviewed in their classrooms or offices. All interviews were audio-taped. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for greater flexibility in communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed the participants to share their perceptions of mentorship by responding to the prepared questions in a highly personal manner. Gorden (1980) refers to materials received prior to the interview as "facilitators of communication" to help prepare interviewees for the interview by supplying them with questions that can trigger responses yet allow for a great deal of latitude in composing responses.

Guiding questions for the interviews were mailed, faxed or electronically mailed to the participants approximately a week prior to the interviews. During the interviews, mentors, proteges, and principals were able to freely share what was of greatest concern to them. Although the guiding questions for the interviews were constructed by the researcher on the basis of the literature review on mentorship for beginning teachers, participants would be encouraged to address issues and concerns that were significant to them based on their experiences in the Mentorship Program (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). The questions provided a structure to open the dialogue between the interviewer and the participants and to gather information that addressed broad common issues in mentoring beginning teachers. By allowing mentors, proteges and principals to relate their experiences, meaning would be constructed from the common threads of their individual accounts. These findings provide a closer look at the mentoring process from the perspective of the individual mentors, proteges and school principals. The participants who were interviewed were telephoned in June to give each participant an opportunity to respond to some aspect of Mentorship Program that they may have omitted during the interview.

Interview Participants

Eight participants (three mentors, three proteges and two principals) were interviewed mid-way through the project. The participants that were chosen reflected a stratified sample of proteges, mentors and principals at elementary and secondary levels. They also represented a variety of organizational patterns in which proteges and mentors operated within the program. Some mentors and proteges worked together in the same building while others collaborated from two different schools. All participants that were interviewed were telephoned and invited to take part in the interview portion of this study. All eight participants agreed.

The reason for including principals in this stage of the research process was to gain an insight into the role of the principal in the Mentorship Program. By asking principals for their input as well as that of mentors and proteges, a clearer picture can be constructed into what helps to make mentoring become a significant and powerful part of a beginning teacher's experience in the classroom and in the school as a whole (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1997).

The first pair interviewed consisted of a protege and a mentor that taught at the same elementary school. The second pair consisted of a protege and a mentor that taught in different elementary schools. The third pair consisted of a protege and mentor that were from the same secondary school. The first principal interviewed was from an elementary school that had a mentor and protege working together in the school but was not from the same school as the first pair comprised of mentor and a protege. The second principal was from a secondary school in which there were several pairs of mentors and proteges working together in the same school but was not from the same school as the third pair of mentor and protege.

The reason for such a broad sample was to get a glimpse of a range of mentoring situations in a variety of schools at different levels in various geographic locations within the district. In that way, the information gathered more closely represented the diversity of settings in which mentors and proteges worked on a day to day basis. Although some mentors and proteges were from the same school, all participants were interviewed individually.

Field Notes

Other data collected as field notes included the ideas shared by program participants at two mini-conferences organized for the Mentorship Program as well as the information session at the beginning of the program and the celebration session at the end of the program. These ideas were captured from verbal sources in the form of notes taken in small discussions at the mini-conferences, feedback sessions, and informal conversations with program participants. This process required the researcher to listen consciously and make notes about the ideas shared by both proteges and mentors during discussions and informal conversations.

During the second mini-conference, on March 25, 1999, the researcher was a participant observer recording the ideas shared in a focus group forum that centred around the issues and concerns of beginning teachers. These recorded ideas were then turned over to the district staff in charge of the Mentorship Program who collated the recorded comments. However, the researcher was able to listen to the ideas shared, jot down key points and to integrate these with the other data collected during the course of the study. This proved to be a valuable source of information as proteges and mentors tended to speak freely about their experiences in the Mentorship Program. They also expressed their hopes and aspirations for others who might find themselves in similar situations the following year. This provided the researcher with information that lay at the very heart of the Mentorship Program because it reflected the vision that the participants had of what constitutes a successful Mentorship Program.

Analysis of the Data

The data gathered from the surveys were used to determine proteges' and mentors' views of what factors contribute to establishing a successful Mentorship Program. A descriptive analysis of the survey responses was done. The purpose of this analysis was to help identify which factors of the Mentorship Program had an impact, positively or negatively, on participants' perceptions of what constitutes a successful Mentorship Program.

Content analysis of the open-ended survey questions was performed to determine the nature and pattern of responses (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992). The raw data were grouped question by question. Responses were then classified by categories that reflected the major themes emanating from data. The object was to provide a straightforward description of what the respondents felt were the characteristics of a successful Mentorship Program (Lancy, 1993). Open-ended responses from the survey done at the beginning of the program were compared with those done at the end of the program to determine similarities and differences.

The researcher repeatedly listened to the audio-tapes of the interviews. The audio-tapes were summarized and the data from the audio-tapes were analyzed. Data management from the interview summaries was facilitated by using a matrix comprised of columns represented by headings taken directly from the research questions. Categories were added as required to record themes arising from the interview questions and responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Bogden and Biklen's (1992) description of data analysis techniques as well as Patton's (1990) guidelines for processing data were used to interpret the information gathered. According to Patton (1990) "the challenge is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns and construct a framework for communication of what the data reveal" (pp. 371-372). Throughout this process, the data were analyzed to determine any patterns that emerged and to look for similarities and differences in the findings from the surveys and interviews.

Ethical Considerations

All the guidelines governing the use of human participants in research were followed in this study. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Elementary Education, the Cooperative Activities Program, Faculty of Education and the participating school district. The Alberta Teachers' Association was informed of the study as well due to its commitment to provide part of the funding required to implement the Mentorship Program in the school district. All participants in the research study were informed in writing of the nature and purpose of the project prior to the commencement of the study. Participation in the project was on a voluntary basis. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All participants were requested to complete consent forms prior to data gathering (see Appendix H). Summaries of the interviews were sent to the participants accompanied by a covering letter (see Appendix I). Interviewees were asked to confirm the content of the interview summaries for accuracy.

Confidentiality of participants was assured during the gathering and reporting of the data. The names of mentors, proteges, principals, or schools were not used in the publication of the results of the study. All responses from the survey data were compiled and reported in such a way that schools or individuals are not identifiable in this study. Anonymity of participants interviewed was further guaranteed by allowing all those interviewed to review and amend summarized comments prior to publication. The researcher, in consultation with the faculty advisor, addressed any issues or concerns arising from the research. All precautions were taken to guard against researcher bias. The researcher worked closely with the school district staff to ensure that the input of all the participants in the study were represented in reporting the findings. All data collected were destroyed after the conclusion of the research project following convocation of the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

The Surveys: Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter contains a description of the distribution of the surveys and an analysis of the results of the surveys. The results from the initial surveys distributed to mentors and proteges and the follow-up surveys for mentors and proteges are examined in detail. The use of tables and figures are intended to provide a visual representation that strengthens the interpretation of the results.

Distribution and Return of Surveys

Seventy-eight initial surveys were distributed to all participants in 41 schools (Tables 1 and 3). Thirty-nine proteges and 39 mentors were surveyed. Twenty-eight proteges returned the initial survey for a return rate of 72 percent (Table 1). Twenty-seven mentors returned the survey for a 69 per cent return rate (Table 3). The participating schools included 25 elementary, 6 elementary/junior high, 6 junior high and 4 high schools. Twenty-six schools had one mentor and one protege in the same school, several schools had more than one pair of mentors and proteges and the remaining schools had only a mentor or only a protege with the corresponding part of the pair in another participating school. All participants that attended the first mini conference were given an initial survey at the mini-conference. Those participants who could not attend had their surveys mailed out to them.

Seventy-eight follow-up surveys were distributed to all participants in 41 schools (Tables 2 and 4). As in the initial survey, all 39 mentors and 39 proteges were surveyed.

Fifteen proteges responded for a 38 per cent return rate (Table 2). Fifteen mentors returned the surveys for a 38 per cent return rate as well (Table 4). All participants that attended the celebration session at the end of the Mentorship Program were given a follow-up survey. Those who could not attend, received their survey in the mail.

Table 1

Distribution and Return of Protege Initial Surveys by Type of School

Level	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Percent Returned
Elementary	23	14	61
Elementary/ Junior High	6	5	83
Junior High	6	6	100
High School	4	3	75
TOTAL	39	28	72

Table 2

Distribution and Return of Protege Follow-up Surveys by Type of School

Level	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Percent Returned
Elementary	23	9	39
Elementary/ Junior High	6	4	67
Junior High	6	2	33
High School	4	0	0
TOTAL	39	15	38

Table 3

Distribution and Return of Mentor Initial Surveys by Type of School

Level	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Percent Returned
Elementary	22	15	68
Elementary/ Junior High	3	0	0
Junior High	10	9	90
High School	4	3	75
TOTAL	39	27	69

Table 4

Distribution and Return of Mentor Follow-up Surveys by Type of School

Level	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Percent Returned
Elementary	22	6	27
Elementary/ Junior High	3	2	67
Junior High	10	5	50
High School	4	2	50
TOTAL	39	15	38

The Surveys

Tables 5 to 13 describe the respondents that answered the initial and follow-up surveys. Table 5 shows that the percentage of the 39 proteges surveyed responded to the surveys and the different types of schools in which they were teaching. In the initial survey, half of the responding proteges or 50 per cent came from elementary schools. This was expected since 23 of the 41 schools participating in the program were at the elementary level (Table 1). Proteges from the junior high schools accounted for 21 per cent and high schools accounted for 11 per cent of the respondents for a total of 32 per cent at the secondary level as shown in Table 5. The remainder of the respondents, 18 per cent, came from elementary/junior high schools. According to Table 5, the number of respondents in the follow-up survey was fewer than in the initial survey with the largest sampling coming from elementary or elementary-junior high schools at 87 per cent, a lower return rate from junior high schools at 13 per cent and none from the high schools.

Table 5

Protege Respondents by Type of School

Level	Initial n = 28	Percent of Total	Follow-up n = 15	Percent of Total
Elementary	14	50	9	60
Elementary/ Junior High	5	18	4	27
Junior High	6	21	2	13
High School	3	11	0	0

Mentors who responded to the survey are described in Table 6. The pattern of responses for mentors was similar to that of proteges in the initial survey for elementary schools. Fifty-six per cent of the mentors at elementary schools responded to the initial survey. Thirty-three per cent of the mentors at the junior high school level and 11 per cent at the high school level responded to the initial survey. A higher proportion of mentors at the elementary/junior high schools responded to the follow-up surveys. Forty

Table 6

Mentor Respondents by Type of School

Level	Initial n = 27	Percent of Total	Follow-up n = 15	Percent of Total
Elementary	15	56	6	40
Elementary/ Junior High	0	0	2	13
Junior High	9	33	5	34
High School	3	11	2	13

per cent of the mentors at the elementary level responded to the follow-up survey. Thirty-four per cent of the mentors at the junior high schools and 13 percent of the mentors at the senior high schools responded to the follow-up survey. The remainder, 13 per cent were mentors at the elementary and elementary-junior high school level.

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the responses to question 1 of the survey which asked how mentors and proteges became involved in the Mentorship Program. Twenty-nine per cent of the proteges and 56 per cent of the mentors volunteered to be part of the mentorship program. Principals invited 32 per cent of the proteges and 37 per cent of the mentors to participate. Eleven per cent of the proteges heard about it through the Alberta Teachers' Association. Of the proteges who reported "other," the majority of these heard about the program through teachers who had agreed to serve as mentors in the Mentorship Program.

Table 7

How Proteges Became Involved in Mentorship Program

	Number of Proteges n = 28	Percent of Total
Volunteered	8	29
Principal asked protege	9	32
Heard from ATA	3	11
Other	8	28

Table 8

How Mentors Became Involved in Mentorship Program

	Number of Mentors n = 27	Percent of Total
Volunteered	15	56
Principal asked mentor	10	37
Other	2	7

The extent to which proteges had any previous teaching experience is described in Tables 9 to 12. Table 9 shows that six proteges or 21 per cent in the initial survey had no teaching experience prior to participating in the program. Table 10 shows that 20 per cent of the proteges in the follow-up surveys had no teaching experience. Table 9 shows that 10 proteges or 36 per cent of the respondents in the initial survey had one year of teaching experience prior to participating in the Mentorship Program. Table 10 shows that 10 proteges or 67 per cent of those who responded to the follow-up survey also had one year of teaching experience prior to participating in the Mentorship Program. In the initial survey, it is significant to note that 12 proteges or 43 percent had two to six years of teaching experience. This number is the result of adding the percentage of proteges indicating they had two to six years of teaching experience prior to participating in the Mentorship Program. Two proteges or 13 per cent of the proteges who responded to the follow-up survey had two years of teaching experience prior to becoming involved in the Mentorship Program.

Table 9

Protege Respondents by Years of Teaching Experience in the Initial Survey

Experience	Number of Proteges n = 28	Percent of Total
0 years	6	21
1 year	10	36
2 years	8	29
3 years	3	11
6 years	1	3

Table 10

Protege Respondents by Years of Teaching Experience in the Follow-up Survey

Experience	Number of Proteges n = 15	Percent of Total
0 years	3	20
1 year	10	67
2 years	2	13
3 years	0	0
6 years	0	0

Table 11 shows that 19 proteges or 68 percent did not have any previous experience in another district. Table 11 also shows that eight proteges or 29 per cent of the proteges responding to the initial survey indicated that they had one to five years of experience in other districts prior to participating in the Mentorship Program. This number is the result of adding the percentage of proteges indicating that they had one to five years of teaching experience prior to being a part of the Mentorship Program.

Table 11

Protege Respondents with Previous Experience in Another District

Experience	Number of Proteges n = 28	Percent of Total
0 years	19	68
1 year	3	11
2 years	4	14
5 years	1	4
Missing	1	3

Table 12

Protege Respondents with Other Teaching Experience

Experience	Number of Proteges n = 28	Percent of Total
0 years	3	11
1 year	6	21
2 years	8	29
Missing	11	39

Table 12 shows that three proteges or 11 per cent had no other teaching experiences prior to being in the Mentorship Program. Table 12 also shows that 14 proteges or 50 per cent of the respondents had one to two years of other teaching experiences. This number is the result of adding the percentage of proteges indicating that they had 1-2 years of other teaching experiences. Twenty-one per cent of the proteges had one year of teaching experience and 29 per cent of the proteges had two years of teaching experience prior to participating in the Mentorship Program. These experiences included teaching abroad, working as a child care worker, and as dance or figure skating instructors. Two proteges had been teacher interns prior to participating in the Mentorship Program. An intern is a teacher who is fully qualified to teach but works with an experienced teacher during the first year with the district. An intern takes on most of the responsibilities of a teacher but is not solely responsible for the teaching and evaluation of students. An intern works under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Table 13 shows that the mentors were a highly experienced group of teachers. In the initial survey, 21 mentors or 78 per cent of the respondents had been teachers for 11 or more years. This number is the result of adding the percentage of teachers who indicated that they had 11or more years of teaching experience. The results in the follow-up survey were similar with 13 mentors or 82 per cent of the respondents reporting they had 11 or more years of teaching experience.

Table 13

Mentor Respondents by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Number of Mentors			
	Initial N = 27	Percent of Total	Follow-up n = 15	Percent of Total
0-5 years	0	0	1	6
6-10 years	6	22	2	12
11-15 years	6	22	4	26
16-20 years	5	19	2	12
21-25 years	6	22	4	26
26-30 years	3	11	2	12
Over 30 years	1	4	1	6

Perceptions of Growth in Skills of Beginning Teachers

In the initial survey, proteges were asked to indicate to what extent they felt the Mentorship Program would help them to increase their instructional competence and self confidence as well as to develop skills in classroom management, curriculum, lesson planning, assessment, student motivation, school policy, procedures and routines and teacher collaboration. The follow-up survey asked proteges to indicate to what extent they felt the Mentorship Program helped them meet these expectations.

The findings are presented in Tables 14 and 15. The skills listed are presented in the same order that they appear in the initial and follow up surveys for proteges. The percentages in Table 14 indicate the level to which proteges agreed that the Mentorship Program would help them develop the skills listed in the survey. In the initial survey, proteges agreed or strongly agreed that the Mentorship Program would help them most in developing skills in the areas of student motivation (97%), curriculum (96%), and assessment (96%) as well as an expectation that they would increase their instructional competence (96%). Proteges also agreed or strongly agreed that the Mentorship Program would increase their self confidence (93%), teacher collaboration (93%), classroom management (89%), lesson planning (89%), and learning about school policy, procedures and routines (75%). The percentages were calculated by adding the number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with whether or not the Mentorship Program would help them develop the skills listed in Table 14.

Table 14

Initial Survey Ratings by Proteges (n = 28) of Perceived Skills Requirements

Skill	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
To increase your instructional competence	0	0	0	0	14	50	13	46	1	4
To increase your self confidence	0	0	1	4	12	43	14	50	1	4
To develop skills in the areas of:										
Classroom management	0	0	1	4	19	68	6	21	2	7
Curriculum	0	0	0	0	13	46	14	50	1	4
Lesson planning	0	0	2	7	18	64	7	25	1	4
Assessment	0	0	0	0	16	57	11	39	1	4
Student motivation	0	0	0	0	17	61	10	36	1	4
School policy, procedures and routines	1	4	5	18	11	39	10	36	1	4
Teacher collaboration	0	0	0	0	5	18	21	75	2	7

Table 15

Follow-up Survey Ratings by Proteges (n = 15) of Perceived Skills Requirements

Skill	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
To increase your instructional competence	2	13	1	7	4	27	7	46	1	7
To increase your self confidence	2	13	0	0	4	27	8	53	1	7
To develop your skills in the areas of:										
Classroom management	1	7	2	13	6	40	5	33	1	7
Curriculum	2	13	0	0	5	33	8	53	0	0
Lesson planning	2	13	1	7	8	53	4	27	0	0
Assessment	2	13	1	7	7	47	5	33	0	0
Student motivation	1	7	1	7	7	47	5	33	1	7
School policy, procedures and routines	1	7	1	7	6	40	5	33	2	13
Teacher collaboration	1	7	0	0	4	27	9	60	1	7

In the follow-up survey, proteges identified the areas and the degree to which they felt the mentorship program helped them experience growth in skill level. As shown in Table 15, they tended to believe that they experienced the most growth in the areas of teacher collaboration (87%), curriculum (86%), self-confidence (80%), student motivation (80%), lesson planning (80%), and assessment (80%). Growth in skills in the areas of instructional competence (73%), school policy (73%), and classroom management (73%) followed in order of importance to them. There was, however, a general decrease in the number of proteges agreeing that the Mentorship Program helped them. Proteges in the follow-up survey were less optimistic about the extent to which the

Mentorship Program helped them increase their knowledge and skills. Decreases occurred in proteges' perceptions of the extent of their growth in skills and knowledge.

In the follow-up survey for proteges, a greater percentage of respondents (67%) were teachers with one year of teaching experience (see Table 10). This figure compares with 36% of respondents in the initial survey for proteges indicating that they had one year of teaching experience (see Table 9). In the initial survey for proteges, eight proteges or 29% had two years of teaching experience whereas in the follow-up survey, only two proteges or 13% had two years of teaching experience. In general, the proteges who responded in the follow-up survey had less teaching experience. It is possible that they perceived they had a greater need for assistance from the Mentorship Program than the proteges that responded in the initial survey. As noted in Chapter 3, since there was no attempt to match the respondents' surveys, it is not known whether the some of the same proteges who responded to the initial survey were also the ones who responded to the follow-up survey. Therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the data gathered.

Mentors were also asked about their perceptions of their role in the Mentorship Program. The roles listed in Table 16 and 17 are presented in the same order that they appear in the survey. Their responses are presented in Tables 16 and 17. Mentors rated helping proteges learn about curriculum (100%), student motivation (100%) and helping them increase their self confidence (96%) as three of their most important roles in the Mentorship Program in the initial survey. These mentors also agreed or strongly agreed that they needed to assist proteges in the areas of learning about classroom management (93%), assessment (92%) and lesson planning (92%) as well as being a friend to proteges

(93%). Helping proteges with school policy (89%) as well as assisting proteges in gaining instructional competence (78%) were the other areas in which mentors felt they could help proteges. These percentages were calculated by adding the number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed when responding to whether or not they felt it was their role to assist proteges in the areas listed in Table 16.

In the follow-up survey all mentors agreed it was their role to help proteges with classroom management (100%), student motivation (100%), and being a friend to proteges (100%). The other areas that were also rated highly were lesson planning, assessment, increasing instructional competence at 93% and learning about school policy, procedures and routines and helping increase proteges' self confidence at 87%. There were very small variations in the results in the follow-up survey (Table 17) from those in the initial survey (Table 16).

Table 16

Initial Survey Ratings by Mentors (n = 27) of Perceived Role in Mentorship Program

Role	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
To increase the protege's instructional competence	0	0	4	15	10	37	11	41	2	7
To increase the protege's self confidence	0	0	0	0	6	22	20	74	1	4
To be a resource to the protege in the areas of:										
Classroom management	0	0	0	0	7	26	18	67	2	7
Curriculum	0	0	0	0	7	26	20	74	0	0
Lesson planning	0	0	1	4	13	48	12	44	1	4
Assessment	0	0	1	4	6	22	19	70	1	4
Student motivation	0	0	0	0	9	33	18	67	0	0
School policy, procedures and routines	0	0	1	4	11	41	13	48	2	7
To be a friend	0	0	1	4	5	19	20	74	1	4

Table 17

Follow-up Survey Ratings by Mentors (n = 15) of Perceived Role in Mentorship Program

Role	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
To increase the protege's instructional competence	0	0	0	0	9	60	5	33	1	7
To increase the protege's self confidence	0	0	0	0	6	40	7	47	2	13
To be a resource to the protege in the areas of:										
Classroom management	0	0	0	0	6	40	9	60	0	0
Curriculum	0	0	1	7	6	40	8	53	0	0
Lesson planning	0	0	4	27	6	40	5	33	0	0
Assessment	0	0	1	7	6	40	8	53	0	0
Student motivation	0	0	0	0	8	53	7	47	0	0
School policy, procedures and routines	0	0	2	13	6	40	7	47	0	0
To be a friend	0	0	0	0	2	13	13	87	0	0

The responses by proteges and mentors presented in Tables 14-17 are shown as percentages and as ratings in Figures 2 and 3 and are representative of the same data. Figure 2 demonstrates how proteges responded in the surveys when asked to indicate the level to which they agreed that that they would learn the skills listed in the surveys. Figure 3 demonstrates how mentors responded when asked to what extent they agreed that it was their role to help their proteges in the areas listed in the surveys. Their responses are presented in ratings ranking the skills in order of perceived importance to

Figure 2: Ratings by Proteges on Developing Skills in:

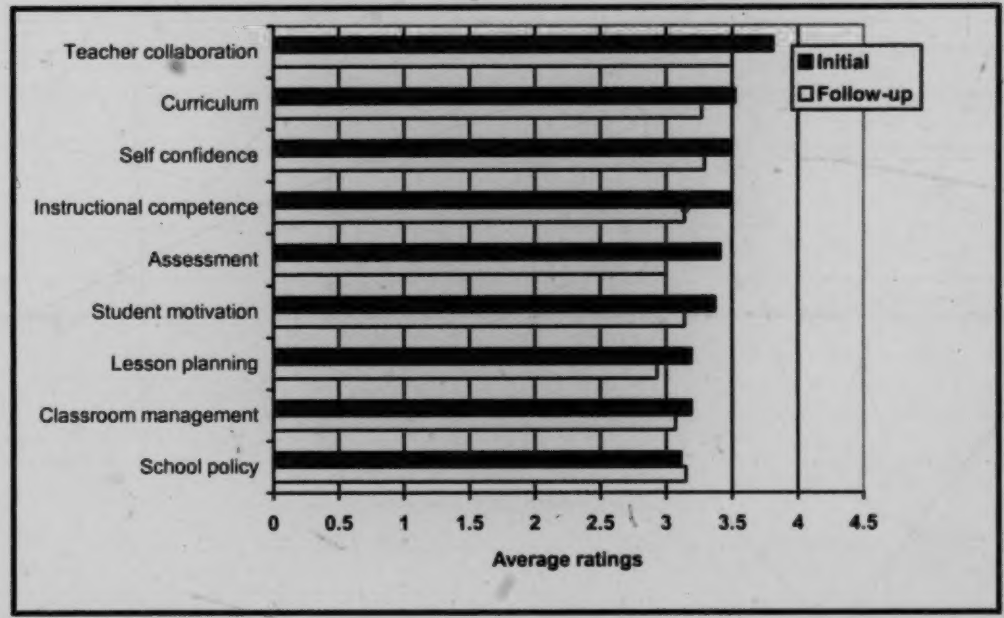
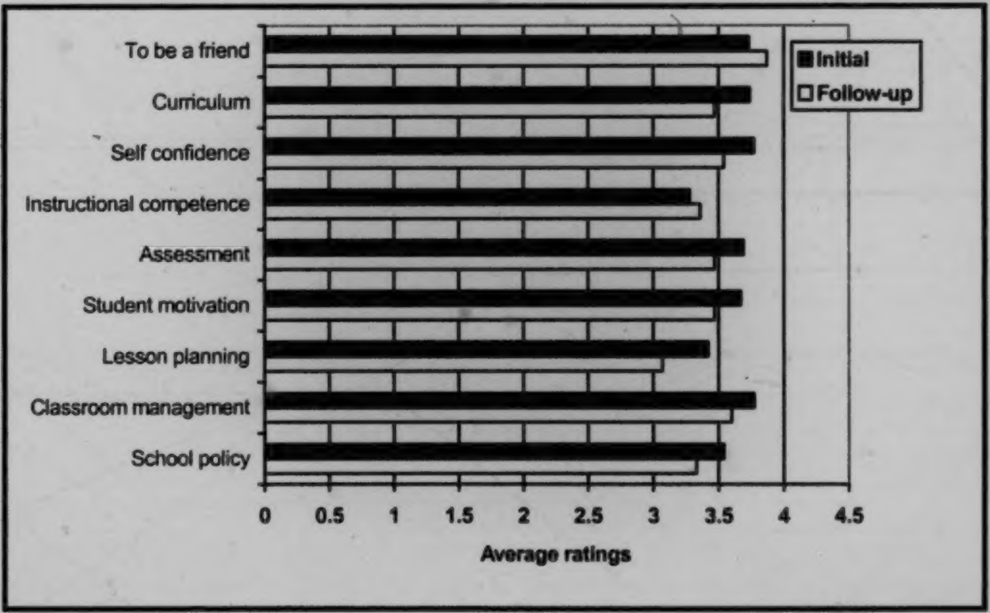


Figure 3: Ratings by Mentors Regarding their Role in Helping Proteges Develop Skills in:

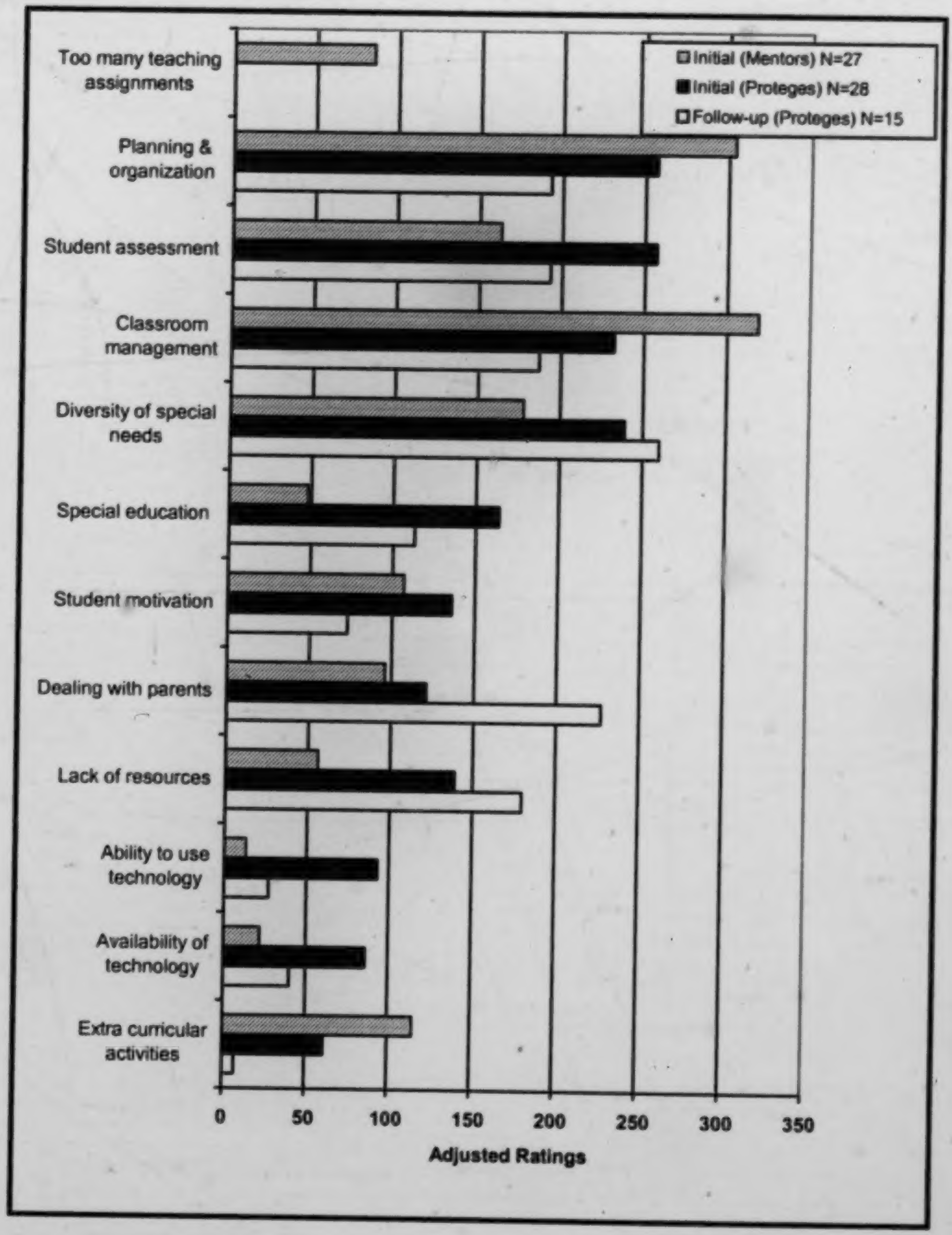


the proteges. Presented in two different formats, the same data provide another picture of which skills proteges hoped to learn at the beginning of the program as compared with the skills that were more important to them near the end of the year (Figure 2). Similarly, Figure 3 shows the extent mentors felt it was their role to help proteges in the areas listed in the surveys. The ratings in Figures 2 and 3 rank the areas in order of perceived importance to mentors and proteges.

Areas of Greatest Concern for Beginning Teachers

Mentors and proteges were asked to rate the areas, in their opinion, that were of greatest concern to beginning teachers. Both mentors and proteges were asked to rank order the top five areas in the initial survey whereas only proteges were asked to rank the top five areas of concern in the follow-up survey. The findings are presented in Figure 4. In the initial survey, eight of the 39 proteges ranked planning and organization as the greatest need followed by classroom management, student assessment, diversity of special needs and special education programs. These rankings were closely mirrored by mentors who ranked classroom management as the greatest concern followed by planning and organization, diversity of special needs, student assessment and extra curricular involvement. In the follow-up survey, 15 of the 39 proteges reported diversity of special needs as their top concern followed by dealing with parents, planning and organization, and student assessment in that order. The ratings by mentors and proteges in Figure 4 were adjusted to allow for comparisons to be made between the initial and follow-up responses by the proteges and the initial responses by the mentors. These ratings were calculated by assigning weights as follows: rank 1 was given a rating of 5, rank 2 was given a rating of 4, rank 3 was given a rating of 3, rank 4 was given a rating of 2 and rank 5 was given a rating of 1. The weighted rankings were added together and divided by the number of respondents. The resulting score was then multiplied by 100 to remove any fractions. Even though the number of respondents in each category was not the same, the results were tabulated to account for differences in frequencies of responses as well. As noted earlier, Tables 5 and 6 show that 28 out of 39 proteges and 27 out of 39 mentors responded to the initial survey. Similarly, 15 out of 39 proteges responded to the follow-up survey.

Figure 4: Proteges' Initial and Follow-up Rankings and Mentors' Initial Rankings of Areas of Greatest Concern



Question 3 on the initial survey for mentors asked for perceptions regarding how the Mentorship Program would help mentors meet their own needs in certain areas. Table 18 and 19 illustrates to what extent mentors felt the program met their expectations in the areas listed. The tables list the areas in order that they appear on the surveys.

Table 18

Initial Ratings by Mentors (n = 27) of Mentorship Program Helping Them Meet Their Expectations

Expectation	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Allow you to grow professionally	1	4	0	0	6	22	20	74	0	0
Allow you to share your expertise as a colleague	0	0	0	0	6	22	21	78	0	0
Allow you to develop your skills in teacher collaboration	0	0	0	0	4	15	23	85	0	0
Allow you to refine your own teaching skills	0	0	2	7	4	15	21	78	0	0
Allow you to become a reflective practitioner	1	4	0	0	7	26	19	70	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	11	24	89

Table 19

Follow-up Ratings by Mentors (n = 15) of Mentorship Program Helping Them Meet Their Expectations

Expectation	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Allow you to grow professionally	0	0	1	7	8	53	5	33	1	7
Allow you to share your expertise as a colleague	0	0	0	0	6	40	9	60	0	0
Allow you to develop your skills in teacher collaboration	0	0	1	7	6	40	7	47	1	7
Allow you to refine your own teaching skills	0	0	1	7	8	53	5	33	1	7
Allow you to become a reflective practitioner	0	0	1	7	5	33	9	60	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	14	93

Tables 18 and 19 describe how mentors perceived that the Mentorship Program helped them meet their expectations in their work with beginning teachers. In the initial survey for mentors, the percentage of mentors who felt that the Mentorship Program would allow them to grow professionally, develop their skills in teacher collaboration, refine their teaching skills and become reflective practitioners was higher than in the follow-up survey. There was a decrease in satisfaction ranging from a three per cent decrease in mentors feeling that the Mentorship Program helped them to become reflective practitioners to a 10 per cent decrease in mentors feeling that the Mentorship Program helped them grow professionally. All mentors felt that the Mentorship Program helped them share their expertise as a colleague.

The reasons for this drop in satisfaction is not clear. Although satisfaction with how the Mentorship Program helped mentors meet their expectations in the follow-up survey was generally high, ranging from 93% to 100%, there was a significant drop in satisfaction. Mentoring is a new role for experienced teachers. It requires veteran teachers to have the knowledge and skills related but not identical to effective teaching, peer coaching and service as a cooperating teacher (Ganser, 1996; Bey & Holmes, 1990). It appears that the Mentorship Program in its first year focused more on the needs of beginning teachers rather than that of mentors as there was no formal training for mentors.

In the open ended portion of the surveys, respondents were able to personalize their feedback. When proteges were asked in the initial survey how they felt that the Mentorship Program would be most helpful to them, they responded by saying they expected to receive a great deal of support from their mentors and from the program in general. Some of their comments were:

> Knowing someone is there to assist me and that I have someone to ask questions.
>
> It will make me feel welcome and not alone. I will have someone to "lean on."
>
> Helping me to understand the curriculum, get organized to teach, plan and assess effectively and build confidence.
>
> It will give me a chance to talk and brainstorm ideas, theories, etc. about teaching and education with other teachers.

In the follow-up survey, when proteges were asked how the Mentorship Program was most helpful to them and their mentors, proteges again referred to the support they appreciated from their mentors. They wrote:

> She was a terrific support to me, providing me with some wonderful advice and ideas for my teaching career.
>
> The flow of ideas – being able to benefit from my mentor's accumulated wisdom.
>
> It gives an automatic, immediate relationship between mentor and mentee without first establishing trust and friendship – great hurdle in first year.

When asked for additional comments or expectations from the Mentorship Program, in the initial survey, proteges offered these ideas:

> It would have been nice to have something like this last year. At this point last year, I felt like I was drowning and it would have been nice to have this support my "first" year.
>
> I believe that the Mentorship Program would be best spent with the mentor. I need applicable, hands-on information: e.g., sit down with my mentor and plan a year of language arts. This is the type of help and guidance I need.

When mentors were asked in the open ended portion of the initial survey how they thought the Mentorship Program would be helpful to them and their proteges, several responded by saying that they looked forward to learning how to help proteges and to grow professionally themselves. The mentors who responded made the following comments:

> Makes me look at who I am – where I'm going/been – where I may need to go.
>
> A challenge (i.e., to take on a new task and not knowing if I will do a good job!)

In response to the last question on the initial survey for mentors asking for additional comments or expectations regarding the Mentorship Program, the following is a sample of their responses:

> I think this is a great opportunity for the profession to learn and grow, as new teachers receive the support they require to perfect their skills.

> I hope to help in all areas of teaching (subjects, ideas, etc.)
>
> Bravo - much needed – expectations for new teachers are overwhelming!

When asked in question 1 of the follow-up survey how the Mentorship Program was helpful to mentors and their proteges, mentors expressed appreciation for the information shared and the opportunities to meet with proteges and others during the course of the program. The following is a sample of their responses:

> For the protege – to answer a zillion everyday questions; mentor – prompts reflection and reassessment of what I do.
>
> It gave my protege someone they could always talk to – any time – a friend right away.
>
> Reinforces the need for teamwork and sharing.
>
> A great chance to share ideas, [the Mentorship Program] makes time to talk about problems, concerns, triumphs.
>
> Recognizing commitment – adds support to our relationship.
>
> An opportunity to talk and discuss and share. Conference days encouraged and re-focused us.

When mentors were asked what changes they would recommend to improve the Mentorship Program, nearly all who responded to the survey offered suggestions. A sample of their responses follows:

> Much more emphasis on time with protege. Not large group conferences - some paid release time – to work with protege (especially if the protege is at a different school).
>
> Start earlier in the year (June) in "matching mentors to proteges.
>
> Perhaps a bit more structure or guidelines.

> I attended the first conference and feel that it was probably more beneficial for proteges.
>
> More involvement of administration and principals.
>
> Common subjects, common prep time.
> More time to work and plan together.
>
> Maybe have regular meetings mentors should set up. Have to log time (or something) so you have to get together.

When asked for additional comments or expectations on the follow-up survey, mentors were supportive of the program but indicated that they would like to have more individual time with proteges:

> I would continue to support the Mentorship Program – it's been terrific.
>
> Maybe we could have more PD days within the schools. What I mean is on my PD day I could go to my partner's school to watch, help, whatever.
>
> I was very happy with this program and feel that it should be expanded if possible.

Based on the data collected in question 5 (*In what areas do you teach?*) and question 6 (*How many students are enrolled in your school?*) there did not appear to be any relationship between what made the Mentorship Program successful for proteges and the subjects they were teaching or the size of school in which they were teaching. What did seem to matter was the quality of assistance that proteges felt they were receiving as illustrated in the responses to the open ended questions described elsewhere in this chapter. In the follow-up survey for proteges and mentors all respondents indicated that they would recommend that the Mentorship Program continue in the future.

Discussion of The Survey Findings

In the initial survey, when asked to rate the top five areas of concern that teachers face in their work, proteges identified planning and organization, classroom management, student assessment, diversity of special needs and special education needs as their biggest concerns. Mentors identified similar concerns in a slightly different order: classroom management, planning and organization, diversity of special needs, student assessment, and extracurricular needs. In response to the follow-up survey, proteges identified diversity of special needs as their number one concern. This was followed by dealing with parents, planning and organization, student assessment, and classroom management. This shift in types of concerns that proteges reported reflects a growth in understanding of the skills required to meet the challenges of teaching. In the early stages, proteges were more concerned about survival in the classroom. They cited concerns about classroom management and planning and organization as their top priorities. These were typical of the concerns of first year teachers (Ganser, 1996; Hersh et al. 1995; Beauchamp & Parsons, 1992).

Based on the responses of proteges in the follow-up survey at the end of the school year, it was evident that proteges' concerns about diversity of student needs showed that they had moved beyond the survival stage of teaching and were beginning to tackle issues related to dealing with students as individual learners. Their second greatest concern about dealing with parents demonstrated that perhaps they had come to understand that teaching involves networking with the home to enhance student learning at school. These are higher order skills that reflect a shift in growth from mere survival to taking charge of the complex task of teaching. It should be noted that these concerns reflect those expressed by the majority of the 15 proteges in elementary and junior high schools. That is due to the fact that there were no responses from proteges in high schools in the follow-up survey. The assumption is made that the proteges at that level may have been too preoccupied with year end exams and activities to respond to the follow-up survey.

Although proteges who responded to the initial survey indicated that the Mentorship Program helped them to increase their instructional competence and self-confidence as well as their knowledge of classroom management, curriculum, lesson planning, assessment, student motivation, school policies and teacher collaboration (see Table 16), there was a decrease in the number of respondents in the follow-up survey that felt the Mentorship Program helped them gain skills and knowledge (see Table 17). There were significant decreases in proteges' perceptions of their growth in skills at the end of the Mentorship Program. It is not clear from the survey data what would account for the decrease in perceived growth in skills for proteges. Since the surveys were anonymous, it is not known how many of the proteges who responded to the follow-up surveys were the same proteges who responded to the initial survey. At the same time, the respondents in the initial survey were generally more optimistic about what they perceived they would gain from the Mentorship Program.

The stages of learning to teach may well take several years. In a publication prepared by the National Evaluation System (1997), the first three years of teaching are considered the make-or-break years. During this time, the induction years, the skills and knowledge that beginning teachers bring to their first teaching positions can be strengthened through experience, reflection, and support form others. It is possible that the Mentorship Program was a good start in helping beginning teachers progress through the development of the knowledge and skills required in teaching and should be viewed as that, a beginning. Hopefully, these results provide information that can be used to improve the delivery of the program in future years. The challenge appears to be how to improve the programs that support beginning teachers by responding to feedback that identifies their needs. A concerted effort should be made to focus on how to provide support to beginning teachers in order to enable them to move from being an entry level teacher to a teacher with increased expertise.

Information provided by proteges in the open ended comments of the surveys indicate that proteges felt that they learned a great deal when they were able to spend time planning and problem solving with their mentors. They also indicated that they did not have much time to spend with their mentors. During the two mini-conferences, they were attending sessions. When they were at their schools, finding time to meet was difficult. Proteges and mentors alike hoped that more time would be allowed in the future for proteges and mentors to help proteges with their long range planning,

There are some similarities between the perceptions of the mentors in this study and those in a study done by Ganser (1996). In a study of 24 mentors who were asked to share what they do in serving as mentors, Ganser found that the mentors viewed their roles as critical in six areas. These were providing beginning teachers with support and encouragement, meeting with them regularly, informing them about school culture and procedures, helping with discipline and classroom management, and helping them with teaching skills (Ganser, 1996, p. 5). Although the participants in each study were asked different questions, the mentors in both studies identified similar skill areas that they hoped to address with beginning teachers in their respective mentorship programs. How quickly these skills can be learned and the best circumstances for learning these skills are not something that is easy to predict.

Concluding Statements

The survey results show that all participants in the Mentorship Program reported that they would recommend continuation of the program in the future. When proteges were asked how their mentors were most helpful to them, they replied by saying that their mentors were good listeners, they provided information and resources, and were quietly supportive. Although this is a strong indication that the Mentorship Program provided proteges with positive support, some questions remain about what parts of the Mentorship Program were most valuable to proteges and why. Responses to the open ended questions of the survey suggest that the Mentorship Program was viewed positively per se but that the participants felt that their time together as mentors and proteges could have been spent in ways that were more beneficial to the proteges. The data collected during the interviews add richness to the survey results. Comments from the Mentorship Program participants interviewed provide additional information that helps to clarify what proteges felt they learned in the Mentorship Program as well as the concerns proteges had about the skill learning they hoped to gain as a result of participating in the program. The data gathered in the interviews will be discussed in the next chapter and some of the concerns raised here will be addressed in that chapter as well.

CHAPTER 5

The Interviews: Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter addresses the task of discussing the findings and integrating the ideas emanating from the interview data into statements that reflect the extent to which the Mentorship Program was successful in helping beginning teachers with their work in the classroom. Information gathered from the interviews will be discussed from a holistic perspective. By integrating the data into meaningful messages that capture the experiences of the participants, the end result is a response from proteges and mentors about their perceptions of the quality of their experiences in the Mentorship Program. It is also an indication of their vision of what contributes to a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers.

The Interviews

The purpose of conducting interviews was to give individuals a forum to express what was on their minds (Patton, 1990). During the interviews mentors, proteges and principals were able to freely share what was of most concern to them. The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed the participants to share their perceptions of mentorship by responding to the prepared questions in a highly personal manner. The questions provided a structure to open the dialogue between the interviewer and the participants. They also provided an opportunity to gather information from the participants on issues that were of common concern in the Mentorship Program.

Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and to relate their thoughts holistically as opposed to being asked to respond to the questions in any particular order. The role of the interviewer, according to Merriam (1988), is that of a good listener who allows the participants to "define their world in unique ways" (p. 73).

The data gathered during the interviews provided a rich context for the experiences of mentors, proteges and principals. Against the backdrop of real school experiences, the heartbeat of the Mentorship Program was more closely captured. The lived experiences of mentors, proteges, and principals became the lens through which the process of mentoring could be understood more fully. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) refer to interviewing as a method of gathering "descriptive data in the subjects' own worlds so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 96).

Overview of Findings From The Interviews

The three proteges, three mentors, and two principals who were interviewed shared personal experiences about how the Mentorship Program worked for them in their schools. All participants indicated that, as a result of the Mentorship Program, proteges received more support in their teaching than if they had been entirely on their own. Proteges indicated that what they appreciated most about the Mentorship Program was that it allowed them to ask for assistance without the stigma of feeling as though they were bothering someone or that they would be viewed as weak teachers because they were asking for help. Proteges reported that participation in the Mentorship Program helped to take the edge off the isolation they felt in their classrooms because they had opportunities to discuss their experiences with their mentors and others in the program. All participants felt that the Mentorship Program fostered collaboration and reflection in their teaching and at their school because of the increased discussion about teaching. Mentors felt that the Mentorship Program allowed them to grow professionally as a result of their interactions with their proteges and their participation in the program. Principals appreciated the additional assistance that new teachers in their schools were receiving. They viewed the Mentorship Program as helping them in their work with beginning teachers.

Mentors and proteges expressed concern about the lack of time to engage in mentoring activities at the school. They indicated that they would have liked some planning time during the school day to work together on long range plans that would benefit the proteges. Principals reported that they felt the mentors and proteges needed time to plan as well but that they did not have the financial resources to release their teachers from their teaching duties to accommodate those needs.

All participants felt that the Mentorship Program was helpful to beginning teachers and that it should be continued. Some of the participants felt that the expectations of mentors, proteges and principals could have been made clearer at the outset of the program. Mentors and proteges felt that they would have benefited from meeting earlier in the school year so that mentors could have helped proteges with school opening concerns and long range planning in a more timely manner. Overall, all participants interviewed viewed the Mentorship Program positively and felt that, with a few modifications, it could continue to be very helpful to beginning teachers.

Field Notes From Participant Observation

As participant observer, the researcher attended the orientation session at the beginning of the Mentorship Program, in September, 1998, and the mini-conferences in October, 1998, and March, 1999 as well as at the celebration in May of 1999. The researcher was able to hear about the successes and challenges of the Mentorship Program through organized discussion forums at the mini-conferences, over coffee during scheduled breaks and other informal chats with mentors and proteges at the meetings and sessions. Whenever possible, the researcher endeavoured to become detached from the conversations in order to be a better listener and to begin processing the information in the context of the data gathered and the literature review on mentoring beginning teachers. The process was helpful in forming a basis for creating the categories for sorting the data in the interviews. The issues that were brought up time and again were obviously critical to the program participants. These issues and concerns became the focal points around which to begin organizing the writing of the results. Throughout this process, the lived experiences of the participants of the study were concrete reminders of the experiences of beginning teachers as mentors and proteges talked about the successes and challenges of beginning teachers.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe the use of field notes as a way for qualitative researchers to "guard against their own biases by recording field notes that include reflections of their own subjectivity" (p. 46). The mentorship of beginning teachers is a complex process that involves many learning experiences over a period of time. During this study, making personal notes and listening to the conversations of proteges and mentors while they participated in discussions at the mini-conferences, the orientation meeting and celebration session was very enlightening for the researcher. It allowed the researcher to hear about the issues that were foremost in the minds of the participants in the Mentorship Program. On those occasions the mentorship participants were in a relaxed setting and were expressing themselves freely about what mattered most to them in their work at their schools and with each other in their mentoring relationships. The field notes contributed to a more detailed rendering of the events that constituted mentorship on a daily basis. The insights gained were invaluable in assisting the researcher to focus on what was truly critical in creating a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers. Overall, the field notes were records of the researcher's observations and were reflective in nature. They contained notes of discussions and conversations heard at Mentorship Program sessions and meetings as described above. Lancy (1993) states that field notes can assist the researcher "to provide a context for the raw facts…and/or to speculate on what it all means; how what was observed relates to earlier observations and so on" (p. 17).

Benefits of the Mentorship Program

This section contains a summary of the themes mentioned most frequently in the interviews as the perceived positive features of the Mentorship Program. They are organized into categories that describe the benefits resulting from protege and mentor participation in the Mentorship Program. These categories emerged from a detailed content analysis of the data gathered. The data from the field notes were also used to elaborate on the themes and to add depth to the conceptual framework of the Mentorship Program as it presented itself in the interviews and field notes. The themes arising out of the data will be related to the findings in the literature. This will help to determine the factors that contribute to a successful Mentorship Program.

Providing Support

In sharing their perceptions of the mentoring process, the participants helped to shape the composite picture of mentoring that began to emerge from their reflections. The most prevalent concept surrounding the notion of mentoring was that it was a supportive measure in the overall scheme of providing assistance to beginning teachers. Mentors felt that their role was that of a supporter to the proteges. All participants felt that the purpose of the program was to provide support to proteges in a non-threatening way. The proteges felt very positive about the support that they received from their mentors as well as what they had learned from their mentors. This thought was reinforced by two proteges in the following way:

> The best part of the Mentorship Program was that I had someone to go to for help.
>
> This person wasn't forced to go into mentorship. She wanted to do it. This person is there for you to help you out. That's a good feeling. You don't just want to go to anybody. Everyone's busy and you don't want to be a burden. You think you should know how to do it yourself.

A mentor summarized the need for providing support to proteges:

> So much bombardment at the beginning of the year. There is a limit to what a person can respond to. A beginning teacher needs someone that can listen and be there for them right on that first day. They need someone who can respond immediately and help to reduce the pressure and stress. That first year is overwhelming. Beginning teachers need help with basic things that are just common sense but they need to be able to ask for help.

Odell and Ferraro (1992) indicated that, of all the support that beginning teachers received from their mentors, they valued emotional support the most. A protege commented:

> The most important thing a mentor offers a protege is emotional support.

During the course of the interviews, it became apparent that selecting mentors who had the capacity to provide effective support was critical. One mentor stated:

> When it comes to selecting mentors, the principal plays a major role. He or she knows who the strong teachers are in a school. Personality and attitude are important considerations.

A protege shared this assessment of how mentors should be chosen:

> Someone who is well respected in the school and by the kids. Someone who is involved in a lot of things and has a lot of respect. Mentors should be hard working.

Abell (1995) reported that the relationship formed between mentors and interns in a beginning teacher internship program is based on mutual respect and trust. Mentors understand that the greatest need of beginning teachers is to be supported. Similarly, in this study, a mentor shared the following insight on the role of mentors in establishing trust:

> The beauty of the mentorship is that it is a non threatening situation. They really trust us. We're not judging. We're there to support them. They need a mentor to be their sounding board and role model. They need to be able to get help on what to do the next day. Often they need support as a crisis occurs so that they can deal with it better. Mentors can provide that support. We're trying our best for them.

Mentors, proteges and principals all reported that beginning teachers receive more help when mentorship is formalized. The fact that there were roles delineated for participants to play ensured that beginning teachers were helped. It also gave credence to the act of mentoring by identifying it as important enough to be a program. A protege stated:

> The best part of the Mentorship Program is that it is organized. It is supported by the district, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and it encourages discussion of teaching.

One mentor explained it this way:

> Formalizing the Mentorship Program helps to make us accountable for helping a beginning teacher. We may do it informally but the program helps us to focus because we are accountable. It formalizes the relationship and says, "This is important."

For proteges, the possible stigma of seeming unskilled was removed by making it legitimate to ask for help. During the interviews several participants indicated that informal mentorships occur as well just as they have in the past. As one mentor put it:

> Mentorship is not new. We have always done it. But this program formalizes it. Formal mentorship is good because beginning teachers can ask for help. The program gives them permission to do so.

Huling-Austin (1990) refers to formal mentorship as a process that gives beginning teachers permission to ask a mentor for assistance because the mentor has been assigned to provide assistance. It also sanctions the assistance given by a mentor so it is not perceived as interference. Formal mentorship thus provides a safe haven for both beginning teachers and mentors to work together on a more even playing field.

Developing Skills in Teaching

The proteges felt that one of the most powerful ways for them to gain skills in teaching was to have their mentors observe them teaching and provide them with feedback. Similarly, both mentors and proteges stated that it was essential for proteges to observe mentors teaching in their classrooms. Teaching by modeling was deemed an effective way to assist proteges in acquiring the skills for managing the learning environment in the classroom. Two proteges stated,

> I gained the most by watching her [mentor] using good teaching strategies – observing the dynamics in her class.
>
> It's a visual kind of learning. It's one thing to tell someone to do this or that. As a protege, you learn by example. After you watch, you can try it in your own classroom. That's worth a thousand hours of sitting there listening. This is a hands on thing you can take back to your own class.

Echoing the same ideas was a mentor who shared this thought:

> Proteges need to see how an experienced teacher handles the classroom. That is why visiting the mentor in his or her classroom is very important. They see how you do it, for example, classroom management, classroom routines and how to have full view of a classroom.

Observations from the researcher's field notes support the need for proteges to observe mentors teaching in their classrooms. During a discussion a protege at the second mini-conference said:

> Proteges want to be able to observe their mentors and other experienced teachers teaching even though I know this costs money.

One of the principals interviewed noted that the Mentorship Program helped proteges focus on developing skills in teaching. This was accomplished by providing opportunities for analyzing what constituted skills in teaching and reflecting on the process over a period of time. Proteges and mentors met formally and informally over the course of the school year to help proteges contextualize teaching for their school settings. This same principal referred to this process as developing conscious competence:

> The biggest benefit [of the Mentorship Program] is the emphasis on conscious competence. Lots of people are competent but they are not conscious of what it is that is making this competence. The advantage of having a Mentorship Program with that focus is that it gives people a vocabulary and a framework to talk about what is competence and in what areas and how do you get more competent.

Fostering Professional Growth

Another theme that recurred throughout the responses of proteges, mentors and principals alike is that the Mentorship Program played a part in initiating beginning teachers into the teaching profession on a positive note. It provided a forum for passing on knowledge, skills and attitudes from experienced teachers to beginning teachers grappling with establishing their philosophy of teaching. The safety net of learning from someone who you could depend on made it easier for beginning teachers to grow into their teaching philosophy within a supportive structure. One mentor explained:

> I had a similar situation when I first started teaching. An excellent experienced teacher helped me. She helped shape my philosophy for all of my teaching. She got me off to a positive start.

A protege expressed the same idea with the following comment:

> The first couple of years are the most critical to help you develop your style. It's a base of what kind of teacher you're developing into.

A principal's comment echoed a similar thought:

> The Mentorship Program encourages positive attitudes and behaviours in new teachers.

A protege, speaking during a discussion at the second mini-conference, reinforced this perception of what beginning teachers expected of the Mentorship Program during a discussion at the second mini-conference:

> A positive school culture needs to be cultivated for the benefit of new teachers so they can develop a positive attitude to teaching.

Mentoring was seen as contributing to the accelerated professional growth of beginning teachers. By minimizing the frustration of trying to make sense of teaching on their own, proteges benefited from being able to ask questions frequently and readily. Less time was spent on worrying about an incident or a concern and more time was spent on problem solving. One mentor captured this important realization in the following way:

> If it wasn't for the program, my protege might have struggled on her own.

A protege described how she assessed her rate of learning as a result of what she learned from her mentor:

> If it wasn't for the Mentorship Program, proteges would have to always learn from their mistakes and the pace of their learning would be much slower.

Delgado (1999) captures this notion of teacher growth in describing how beginning teachers can gain efficacy in setting goals that go beyond immediate concerns. In the initial stages of teaching, new teachers focus on how to get through the next hour, to the end of the day, and then through the next day all over again. As mentors and proteges collaborate, proteges learn to be able to see the school year as more of a continuum rather than a series of days to survive.

Reflecting and Collaborating

All the mentors and principals felt that having a protege helped experienced teachers to reflect on their own practices. It helped veteran teachers to look at their own teaching as they explained to proteges how they organized the curriculum and their classrooms for teaching. One mentor explained:

> Having to explain to someone else your rationale for organizing learning in a particular way helps to clarify it in your mind. You emerge a stronger teacher in the end yourself.

The Mentorship Program provided experienced teachers with a mechanism for re-visiting their beliefs about teaching. It provided beginning teachers with a template for teacher behaviour that included working with others right from the outset. One principal expressed it this way:

> Mentorship is positive to the school. It allows mentors and other experienced teachers to take a leadership role with beginning teachers that forces them to focus on the positive in their teaching practice.

Another positive result of the Mentorship Program came in the form of increased collaboration as viewed by teachers and principals. Having a Mentorship Program in a school increases the frequency of teachers talking about teaching. When teachers engage each other in conversations about teaching, the rate of collaboration increases exponentially. The entire school benefits from a renewed interest in why teachers entered into the profession of teaching in the first place. A principal captured this thought by saying:

> An important spin off of this program is that teachers talk about the program in the staff room and teachers helping each other becomes an accepted practice. The Mentorship Program is a good example of teachers collaborating.

Minimizing Teacher Isolation

"Teaching is a lonely enterprise" (Beauchamp & Parsons, 1992, p. 1). Mentors, proteges and principals all commented on the degree to which teachers feel isolated from each other as they engage in teaching in their own classrooms. Proteges voiced this concern more loudly than others. They said they felt unsure of their teaching practices. They wondered if their approach to teaching was appropriate and if were they really helping their students learn. They wanted to know how other teachers responded to similar challenges in teaching. They needed to have a better grasp of the benchmarks that defined effective teaching. They yearned to see how experienced teachers plied their art. They wanted constructive criticism about their teaching from their mentors and others in the school. They were looking for affirmation that they were on the right track or at least how to get on track. A protege shared this concern:

> As a teacher, you feel like an island. You are so isolated and away, especially in the first year... It's kind of a lonely feeling.

The teaching profession has a long tradition of isolation and a cultural myth of self-sufficiency (Enz, 1996). Delgado (1999) contends that isolation shatters the goals, diminishes the spirits, and destroys the self-confidence of new teachers. When they begin their first teaching jobs, beginning teachers are usually left alone in a classroom with no significant support. A Mentorship Program, on the other hand, invites contact with a mentor and with other mentors and proteges. Early in their careers, beginning teachers in a Mentorship Program learn to meet with other teachers and form alliances and friendships with other beginning teachers. Hersh et al. (1995) found that one reason mentoring has been successful is due to the opportunity it provides first year teachers to meet with other first year teachers (p. 35). One protege referred to the experience of being in the Mentorship Program in the following way:

> Meeting in the large group with the other beginning teachers helps you share your experiences and to touch base. It helps you to know that you are not alone. Others are encountering similar experiences. Beginning teachers are all bonded together by the common bond of being new, a little insecure about some things.

Mentors play an important role in encouraging beginning teachers to reach out to colleagues and thus break the chain of isolation that has been so prevalent in the past. Too often, probably due to oversight, beginning teachers are left to fend for themselves as everyone in the school setting is immersed in their own daily teaching responsibilities. The Mentorship Program encouraged working with others by virtue of its organization, which involved creating pairs of teachers. One mentor spoke about the advantages of working together:

> The best part of mentorship is that you get to work with another person closely; you get to know them very well. You establish a bond and it builds teamwork.

A protege summed it up this way:

> Every beginning teacher should have a mentor in the same building even if it's not at the same level.

Encouraging Reciprocity

Proteges expressed the desire to reciprocate their learning by being helpful and a benefit to their mentors. It is highly likely that being immersed in a collaborative working environment encouraged this response on the part of proteges. They felt a great deal of gratitude for the easy access they had to problem solving sessions with their mentors. One pair of mentor and protege discussed the critical issues of each day on the same day or during the very next day, at the latest. Another pair spoke on the telephone in the evenings because they worked in different schools. The mentor in the second example encouraged the protege to discuss critical incidents as they arose to ensure that the protege could respond to difficult situations with greater confidence as quickly as possible. Because adults seek reciprocity in their interpersonal relationships, it is also essential that the mentor is receptive and able to learn from the beginning teacher as this creates a sense of equity between them (Enz, 1996). A protege put it this way:

> Proteges need to be resourceful, stay positive and reciprocate by sharing ideas of their own.

Another protege offered this thought:

> It gives proteges a chance to improve their skills and give mentors a chance to be a leader.

Contribution of the Mentorship Program to the Professional Development of Beginning Teachers

All proteges interviewed were thankful that they had mentors. All mentors interviewed recognized that they played a pivotal role in the careers of the beginning teachers they mentored. All participants interviewed acknowledged that the assistance provided to proteges early in the school year was most helpful when it was focused on ways to help a protege get organized and feeling in control. As the year progressed, the assistance needed broadened to encompass the multiple demands of teaching. Ganser (1996) refers to this as moving beyond "surviving" the job to "thriving" as teachers. In the initial phase of teaching, beginning teachers are most concerned with management of the most obvious aspects of teaching which include being prepared to teach and to ensure that students are engaged in learning. As beginning teachers learn how to get past these first major hurdles of teaching, they can move beyond the survival stage to better understand the instructional needs of all their students who represent a broad range of learning needs. They come to understand that teaching is a complex undertaking that involves teaching students, dealing with parents, interacting with colleagues, and a whole host of elements that define the act of teaching. Speaking about the Mentorship Program, one mentor stated:

> The Mentorship Program is an excellent idea; it's a phenomenal idea. We need strong teachers mentoring younger teachers coming through the ranks. All first year teachers should have a mentor. This program should continue.

A protege stated:

> One word to summarize my experience is "positive." I have been able to observe my mentor in her classroom and she has helped me with resources. I call her when I need ideas and a lift. She even sends me things. I gained the most by watching her using good strategies. Mentors should be commended for their efforts. I am so grateful for what my mentor has done for me.

Contribution of the Mentorship Program to the Professional Development of Mentors

Although the needs of the proteges was the prime focus of the Mentorship Program, it was evident from the data gathered that mentors gained professionally as a result of their participation in the Mentorship Program. One principal stated:

> The Mentorship Program is professional development for experienced teachers.

Another principal put it this way:

> It refreshes the mentor and it provides information to the protege that is useful to both those people. The advantage of the Mentorship Program is mainly to the protege but is also to the mentor.

A mentor put the experiences in the Mentorship Program in perspective by saying:

> The Mentorship Program is good because it helps experienced teachers realize what it is like to be a beginning teacher. They tend to forget and, therefore, might not help if there was no formal Mentorship Program.

Wollman-Bonilla (1997) refers to mentoring as a two-way street whereby mentoring is seen both as a process to induct new teachers into the profession and as professional development for experienced teachers. A study of the mentoring program in Barrington, Rhode Island in 1994-95 found that mentors as well as beginning teachers benefited from the program. Mentors felt that mentoring gave them a boost in their self-esteem, reduced feelings of isolation, encouraged reflection on their own practice, and that mentors learned from proteges as well. Mentors stated that they were inspired to see things in a different light as a result of their interactions with their proteges. A mentor in the Rhode Island study stated, "Sometimes I feel I've learned more than I've shared" (Wollman-Bonilla, 1997, p. 48). One principal in the Mentorship Program in this study went so far as to take mentorship a step further:

> Even teachers who change sites may need a mentor. Even teachers who change levels need a mentor. Experienced teachers need a buddy too sometimes.

Wasley (1999) refers to this challenge in teaching as building a repertoire. She suggests that teachers build a repertoire of techniques for working with students by receiving feedback from colleagues with significant expertise. This process is strengthened by working with colleagues who are focused on learning similar strategies. Feedback helps to correct misunderstandings about methodology while a collegial atmosphere allows individuals to understand the range of possibilities that a strategy or approach holds. One mentor expressed this need to connect with beginning teachers while sharing expertise with them in the following way:

> It's very rewarding for mentors to watch a beginning teacher grow.

Thus, by working with proteges, mentors became more aware of their own philosophy of teaching and their own skills. By identifying what knowledge about teaching they wanted to share with proteges, mentors reinforced their own understanding of what it means to be able to teach others. In the process, they became more effective teachers.

Overall Benefits

When asked how the Mentorship Program was most helpful to proteges and mentors, proteges repeatedly stated that the program helped to create an automatic, immediate support system right at the beginning of the school year. This was very important to proteges who felt fortunate to have someone that they could go to for support and advice without having to worry about protocol and timing. Overall, the vast majority of proteges stated they could count on mentors to be an anchor without having to go through all the formalities of asking someone for assistance when they felt uncomfortable and were worried that they might be viewed as a burden. Both parties felt that the Mentorship Program served as a conduit to launch the support that proteges need from experienced teachers. One principal summarized the experiences of the participants in a manner that was expressed numerous times by various participants:

> I would sum up by saying that a Mentorship Program is a good idea. This program has a great deal of promise. I think there are areas to consider for revision. If at all possible, I would like to see something continue.

Challenges Within the Mentorship Program

The challenge that the Mentorship Program participants most frequently mentioned in the interviews was lack of time for mentors and proteges to meet regularly. It was especially difficult to find time to meet and establish a relationship if a mentor and protege were not in the same school. A mentor lamented:

> The drawbacks of the program is that we are limited for time. There needs to be a day or two set aside for mentors and proteges to work together. It is important to work one on one with your protege.

A principal echoed this concern:

> The drawback is not the program; the drawback is the limitation of time.

All mentors, proteges and principals felt that lack of funds earmarked for releasing mentors and proteges from their teaching duties to visit each other during classroom time was also a disadvantage. Proteges also felt that lack of time and funds prevented their mentors from observing them teach in their classrooms. Several proteges echoed this idea:

> I would love to have my mentor watch me teach and see how I organize the classroom so she could suggest how I could improve what I'm doing.

> The idea of the mentorship is a good thing. I would change it a little. I would love to have my mentor come to my class and observe me. In student teaching, there is someone observing you. Then you're supposedly knowing it all and you're in the class by yourself. You have no, "This was great. This was okay. Maybe try this." It's kind of a lonely feeling. It also creates insecurities. You can't grow unless you get feedback.

Other concerns mentioned were mentors and proteges being placed far apart in the same building or indeed in different schools and unclear expectations of program participants at the beginning of the program. Entries in the researcher's field notes reveal that proteges shared this concern during an open forum discussion at the second mini-conference. One observed:

> I need my mentor to be in *my* school.

A mentor voiced this concern:

> We haven't been given a whole lot direction on what to do. This project needs to be more clearly defined. We all need to know what we are expected to do.

Scott and Compton (1995) found that mentors and proteges in a New Brunswick study shared similar concerns. Shortage of time, lack of information, failure to develop a collegial relationship, pairs mismatched in grade levels, and classrooms not in close proximity were their greatest concerns. Ganser (1996) reported that obstacles to mentoring included lack of time for meetings and classroom visits, other responsibilities interfering with mentoring, a mismatch between beginning teacher and mentor concerning the teaching assignment and teaching ideology, and lack of administrative support.

One protege spoke about some of the ways in which the needs of beginning teachers could be addressed:

> Beginning teachers are the ones that need extra preps, planning time and opportunities for professional development. The Mentorship Program could help to make this happen.

A cross section of proteges and mentors felt that the Mentorship Program was helpful and necessary but that it needed to be fine tuned. A suggestion for improvement frequently mentioned was to match mentor-protege pairs before the school year commenced. Another frequently mentioned point for improvement was to have fewer scheduled large group professional development activities such as mini-conferences and more time and financial resources allotted to the pairs so that they could work together on site to address specific curriculum and organizational concerns of proteges.

One of the principals felt that the Mentorship Program would benefit from shorter, more frequent sessions throughout the year as opposed to the mini-conference format that was used twice during the year. Alluding to the need for beginning teachers to grow into reflective practitioners, the same principal indicated that the Mentorship Program needed to have a professional development component for mentors. In addition to learning about the concerns of beginning teaching and how to help them, this principal felt that mentors needed to be coached on how to assist beginning teachers to reflect on their teaching. The principal commented:

> Training for mentors should address the components of a reflective practice (what that means and how it happens). Part of how that happens is that people have to meet more often to stay focused on what proteges need to learn. The conversations might be different (more reflective) if people met more frequently.

Finally, the notion of mentorship was viewed as something that should be extended to all beginning teachers in their very first year in the classroom. The significance of this feedback is that it implies giving all beginning teachers an opportunity to have a mentor no matter what type of teaching contract they had been offered. One mentor expressed it this way:

> Teachers on probationary contracts need mentors as well if not more [than the proteges in the first year of a continuous contract].

Concluding Statements

This chapter contains a summary and analysis of the recurring themes in the interview data gathered. As well, it includes the understandings gained through the collection of field notes. The information is presented in broad themes and organized into the perceived benefits resulting from the Mentorship Program as well as the perceived challenges within the Mentorship Program.

Participants in the Mentorship Program were generally very supportive of the program. Proteges commented over and over again how much they appreciated the support they were given as beginning teachers. It is evident that the Mentorship Program provided a high level of support to proteges. Mentors enjoyed their role as experienced guides and felt that they had learned new skills. All participants made it clear that they did not have enough time together to provide assistance to proteges in planning and organizing for teaching. They expressed frustration at not having time to get together as pairs in the formal part of the program. They had to find time on their own to discuss the concerns that were peculiar to each pair of mentor and protege.

In the final analysis, all participants agreed that the program should be continued. They expressed the hope that the program could evolve and become more responsive to the needs of beginning teachers.

CHAPTER 6

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the factors that contribute to a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers. The data gathered in the surveys distributed to mentors and proteges at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program provided information about the needs of beginning teachers, their expectations of the Mentorship Program and their perceptions of how the program met their needs. The data gathered in the interviews likewise provided insights into what the participants felt constituted a successful Mentorship Program. Viewed from a holistic perspective, the results from both the quantitative data from the surveys and the rich contextual qualitative data from the interviews combined to create a composite picture of the Mentorship Program as seen through the eyes of the participants. The information from the field notes added depth and personal perspectives from mentors and proteges about what really mattered to them in the Mentorship Program. The feedback obtained from all participants in the Mentorship Program in the surveys and interviews indicated that they recommend continuation of the program in the future.

Summary

An overview of the study of mentoring beginning teachers is presented in this chapter. Areas where this study added to the literature by identifying what factors contribute to a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers are identified. In the final section, recommendations are made for improved practice and further study needed in this area.

This study provides the following answers to the research questions asked at the beginning of this dissertation.

1. How is mentorship perceived by proteges?

Nearly all proteges viewed the Mentorship Program very favourably. In the follow-up survey and in the interviews, all expressed a desire to have the Mentorship Program continue for future beginning teachers. Having a program in place assured them that there was an experienced teacher they could turn to for assistance when they were unsure of what to do. They appreciated being able to seek assistance without feeling that they were being perceived as weak. Halford (1998) states "that the chance to connect to a veteran teacher is a powerful resource … and a professional lifeline" for beginning teachers (p. 83).

2. How is mentorship perceived by mentors?

Mentors reported that participating in the Mentorship Program was a very positive experience. They felt it was rewarding to watch a new teacher grow professionally. Most mentors felt that, as a result of participating in the Mentorship Program, they were forced to clarify their own beliefs about teaching. They viewed this as an opportunity to reflect about their own teaching practices. All mentors commented about the time commitment required in order to make the mentor-protege partnership effective. Mentors felt that they had to be flexible and willing to spend time with proteges. All the mentors who responded in the follow-up survey and those interviewed indicated that they would like the Mentorship Program continue in the future.

3. What is the role of school administration in a Mentorship Program?

Principals reported that the role of school administration is to be supportive of the program. That support is needed in several ways. Encouraging potential mentors and proteges to participate in mentorship programs and activities is the first step. Helping to create the conditions for success is the next step. This can be done by the way timetables and physical space are organized. Where possible, creating opportunities for mentors and proteges to work collaboratively is encouraged. This can be in the form of assigning them classrooms close to one another, common preparation times, supervision schedules and sometimes even similar teaching assignments. As well, emotional and financial support is essential. Asking participants how the program is coming along from time to time and supporting them in their professional development activities contributes to overall program success.

Principals viewed the Mentorship Program as a positive orientation to teaching for beginning teachers. They appreciated having assistance at the school level for introducing proteges to the role of a teacher. They felt that the program constituted professional development for proteges, mentors and, to some extent, the teachers in their schools who worked closely with the mentors and proteges. It appears that the program had captured the attention of other teachers who benefited from their interactions with Mentorship Program participants. Principals felt that the Mentorship Program had a positive effect on bringing out the best in teachers as they viewed mentors working with their beginning teachers and talking about teaching with their colleagues.

4. Is mentorship viewed differently at different instructional levels: elementary and secondary schools?

Proteges at the secondary level tended to be more concerned about learning curriculum content and how to organize the content effectively than proteges in elementary schools. Due to the low rate of returns from proteges in the follow-up survey, it is difficult to make valid comparisons.

5. What environmental or contextual circumstances are necessary to support a Mentorship Program?

The Mentorship Program is most effective when the mentor and protege establish a close working relationship. Proteges learn best when they feel comfortable going to their mentors as often as necessary about major concerns as well as minor ones. Another vital component in a successful Mentorship Program is the interest and active participation of the whole school. Every experienced teacher is a potential mentor. The greater the involvement of the staff as a whole, the greater the potential that a protege will successfully integrate the skills needed to become an effective teacher.

6. What are the professional development needs in a Mentorship Program?

Professional development needs to take place prior to the commencement of the program. Ideally, mentors and proteges should be matched in the spring prior to the next school year (Ganser, 1996). Participants need to be aware of the expectations of the program at the outset of the program. Mentors should receive an orientation that gives them a realistic perspective of how they can be of maximum assistance to their proteges. This serves to set a tone for the program. It also helps mentors understand that mentoring begins even before a protege steps into a classroom for the first time as a new teacher. It intensifies after a protege begins teaching.

7. What are the benefits of the Mentorship Program?

The benefit most frequently mentioned was the support provided to beginning teachers. Because the Mentorship Program was a formalized arrangement between mentors and proteges, it gave proteges permission to ask for assistance without appearing weak or incapable. This took enormous pressure off beginning teachers who wanted to become proficient teachers as quickly as possible. The Mentorship Program encouraged proteges to ask questions and seek clarification of the many aspects of teaching.

Another benefit frequently mentioned was the increased collaboration that resulted between teachers. By creating a forum for discussing teaching, the Mentorship Program promoted the examination of teaching by program participants as well as other teachers in schools in which the program was taking place. For beginning teachers it provided a partner with whom to collaborate at the outset of their teaching career. Not only did this help beginning teachers with their planning, identification of resources, and problem solving in teaching, it exemplified for beginning teachers how much more can be accomplished by working together instead of separately. The added benefit was that mentorship provided an organizational structure that mitigated against the isolation in teaching that is so poignantly described in the literature by replacing the isolation with a cadre of professionals who cared enough about beginning teachers to help them on a daily basis and who met periodically throughout the year to address the concerns of beginning teachers in a variety of workshops, meetings, and a celebration at the end of the program.

Mentors reported that the Mentorship Program invited reflection about teaching. It helped them to reflect on their own practices. Having to verbalize what you do and why you do it brings into focus the philosophy of education that you practice on a day to day basis. They felt that such an examination of teaching fosters the development of excellent teaching practices as mentors help proteges clarify the elements of teaching and hence sharpen their own skills in teaching.

8. What are the drawbacks in a Mentorship Program?

The biggest drawback to the Mentorship Program was the time it took to implement the program. Mentors and proteges felt that there was so little time in a school day to devote to the mentoring process. A suggestion by the vast majority of participants was that mentors and proteges needed time to meet for at least two half days during the school year to allow them to address a number of concerns within a large block of time. This could include observing each other in their respective classrooms, long range planning and any other organizational concerns that might be a priority for the protege. Although the time spent at the mini-conferences was valuable for those who attended, most felt that they needed time together to respond to the specific needs of the protege.

Conclusions

This study addressed the main research question: What factors contribute to establishing a successful Mentorship Program for beginning teachers in one school district? The study found that beginning teachers felt that the Mentorship Program provided a mechanism for them to receive assistance from more experienced colleagues within an organized format.

This study confirmed the findings of Head et al. (1992). They state that the heart and soul of mentoring is an outgrowth of a personal belief in the value and worth of people and an attitude toward teaching that focuses on passing the torch to the next generation of teachers. Besides creating new career opportunities for veteran teachers, assigning mentors to work with beginning teachers represents an improvement "over the abrupt and unassisted entry into teaching that characterizes the experience of many beginning teachers" (Feiman-Nemser, p. 1).

Kay (1990) says successful mentors are individuals who feel a sense of obligation to self and others. Based on the essence of the data collected, it is the opinion of the researcher that mentorship is an example of teachers modeling for other teachers the best of what the teaching profession has to offer to beginning teachers. Mentorship is a jewel in the teaching wilderness offering timely support to beginning teachers at a critical juncture in their teaching career.

Implications for Practice

The enthusiasm for mentoring needs to be matched by clarity of purpose for mentoring if it is to become a practice that improves learning for students. If mentoring is to function as a strategy of reform, it must be linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of teacher learning and supported by a professional culture that favours collaboration and inquiry (Feiman-Nemser, p.1). This means that teaching practices must address the needs of beginning teachers in earnest. Formal mentorship programs need to be continued. This will require philosophical and financial commitments from all stakeholders. School districts, teacher associations, universities, and provincial education authorities must work in partnership to ensure that beginning teachers are not left to fend for themselves. The risk is too great that far too many capable new teachers will leave the teaching profession prematurely because of a lack of support systems.

Beginning teachers have said that they require support in the classroom to grow and thrive. In response to the expressed need of beginning teachers to receive feedback about their teaching from mentors and to observe mentors teaching, mentorship programs in the future need to include this in their program plans. This is supported by the findings of Charnock and Kiley (1995). In a study designed to identify the causes of high rates of attrition in Baltimore, they found that the preferred type of assistance by beginning teachers was to be able to observe the teaching of their colleagues as most valuable followed by having a teacher as a mentor. Huling-Austin (1992) likewise found that assigning mentors and allowing beginning teachers to observe and be observed are practices supported by research. Similarly, in this study proteges valued the time they spent with their mentors most of all. They felt that they learned most when they spent time observing in each other's classrooms.

The experiences of beginning teachers are arduous. Any efforts to spare them unnecessary burdens allow them to concentrate on their teaching tasks. One such area that requires closer scrutiny is the placement of beginning teachers. Based on research gathered at Southwest Texas University, Huling-Austin (1992) cautions against the "all too common practice of giving beginning teachers assignments that involve multiple teaching preparations, classes out of their area of expertise, and demanding extracurricular responsibilities - practices that not only add stress but also hinder the process of learning to teach" (p. 179). "Given comparisons to fields such as medicine and law, which recognize the needs of new professionals more fully, some observers have dubbed education the profession that eats its young" (Halford, 1998, p. 33). Glickman (1993) challenges us to rethink how we treat beginning teachers. Instead of assigning them the most difficult classes and timetables, we need to follow the practice of other professions by increasing job challenges over time as beginning teachers acquire experience and expertise.

Mentoring as an accepted and expected practice needs bolstering. It should not be treated as a passing fad. It needs to be implemented wisely and refined over time. Ideas about mentoring new teachers need to be expanded to incorporate a wider framework of what help for beginning teachers looks like in practice. Delgado (1999) encourages experienced teachers to tune into the needs of beginning teachers by reaching out informally as well. She challenges veteran teachers to take on the roles of mentors even if they have not been formally designated as mentors. Her experiences lead her to believe that the "two most practical ways experienced teachers can help new teachers are through chance meetings in the hallways and through scheduled discussions during common preparation times" (Delgado, 1999, p. 27). This type of informal mentoring combined with a formal mentorship can help beginning teachers meet their classroom challenges with increased confidence.

A professional development component for mentors also needs to be included in a mentorship program. At the very least, professional development for mentors should involve an orientation with an overview of program expectations and periodic meetings or workshops for the participants. More intensive training could address the kind of concerns new teachers face as well as what constitutes good coaching and modeling. To assist mentors with classroom observation skills, guidelines should to be given for practicing non-evaluative styles of supervision (Wolfe, 1992). As well, time should be devoted to exploring what it means to be a reflective teacher. Ganser (1996) indicates that mentoring needs to be viewed as a form of staff development for both the beginning teacher and the mentor.

Expanding the positive impact of mentoring is yet another consideration. Mentorship need not be limited to beginning teachers. It could be expanded to provide assistance to teachers in new teaching situations. While such a move would be encouraging, it is essential to, at the very least, clarify who the beginning teacher is in a mentorship program. Although the Mentorship Program identified beginning teachers or proteges as those teachers in the first year of a continuing contract, the program is critical for brand new teachers teaching in their very first year.

This study shows that there is a need to differentiate between levels of support in mentorship programs. Teachers who are in their very first year of teaching usually require more intense, individualized support than those in the first year of a continuous contract. The former is a true protege, the latter is often a new teacher with some previous experience within the district or a teacher who has had teaching experience in another district. Although their needs are similar, the true beginning teacher often has more urgent needs related to surviving in the classroom. Teachers in their very first year of teaching are in a very vulnerable position and thus require assistance that is formalized and organized. A study that focused on actual beginning teachers would help school districts understand more fully how to address the needs of beginning teachers in their first teaching assignments.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. How proteges learn from mentors

Many studies to date have focused on programmatic, administrative and role issues. More attention needs to be given to the connection of mentoring to the way in which beginning teachers learn how to teach, the influence of context on mentors' practices and the potential mentoring has to improve the quality of teaching (National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 1999). Little (1990) indicated that "future studies need to be more comprehensive from a theoretical perspective and designed to provide an in depth examination of the context, content and consequences of mentoring" (p. 297). The education community understands that mentors have a positive affect on teacher retention, but that leaves open the question of what mentors should do, what they actually do, and what beginning teachers learn as a result (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

2. Differences in needs between elementary and secondary proteges

A study that examines the differences in needs between elementary and secondary beginning teacher would be helpful in creating a better understanding of the similarities and differences in mentorship program needs for elementary and secondary schools.

3. Determining the needs of new teachers with no previous teaching experience

A study limited to actual beginning teachers in their first teaching assignment would be helpful in determining what kind of support and assistance is helpful to new graduates from universities faced with their very first teaching assignment. Such a study would bring clarity to the needs of brand new teachers and those who do not have a continuous contract with the district but have some teaching experience.

4. Professional development for mentors

Determining the type and extent of professional development required for mentors is another area needing clarification. Because most mentors are exemplary teachers, they already possess a repertoire of skills that have helped them to be very successful in teaching. How to create a program that acknowledges the skills they already have with those that they need to develop is an area that needs careful study. This might well be an initiative that can be jointly undertaken by a combination of school boards, universities and provincial authorities. A study of the suitability of building mentorship training into the continuous growth plans of teachers is one possibility. Another might be the creation and examination of a university based program for teacher mentors that is closely connected with school district efforts in professional development for mentors. The findings from such studies would have the added benefit of promoting a high standard for the delivery of mentorship programs for beginning teachers.

Responding to the Feedback From the Mentorship Participants

In the second year of the Mentorship Program in the school district in this study, it should be noted that the professional development aspects of the program were modified to incorporate some of the suggestions made by the participants in this study. Instead of scheduling two large group mini-conferences, each pair of mentor and protege spent a day helping proteges with long range plans. Mentors were provided with coaching in the art of mentoring and proteges met several times during the school year to address their individual concerns. Most sessions were one half day in duration and were scheduled during the school day. Both mentors and proteges met for a celebration session at the end of the school year. Another important modification was the way a protege was defined. In the second year of the program, beginning teachers on a temporary contract with the school district could also be included in the Mentorship Program. This was a significant change because it broadened the scope of the program to include the teachers who were genuinely in their first year of teaching and in dire need of mentoring. Plans were underway to continue refining the Mentorship Program in subsequent years.

These changes illustrate how important it is to evaluate mentoring programs by asking for feedback from the participants. Information gathered by the district at the end of both mini-conferences using a written feedback form was shared with the participants and was shared at a public meeting of the school district. This information was also useful in identifying the type of assistance deemed most useful to the mentors and proteges.

Endnotes

A study of mentorship for beginning teachers involves closely examining a great many aspects of mentoring. These include teacher preparation, training of mentors, responsibilities of school administrators, funding concerns, evaluation procedures, long term planning, and a host of others issues peculiar to each school district. What must not be lost on the mentorship landscape is that the prime reason for all the efforts surrounding teacher mentorship is to ensure that students receive the best teaching. To deflect the focus of mentorship to any other issue but student achievement would be erroneous and misleading. The primary reason for establishing and refining mentorship programs for beginning teachers is to nurture teachers in such a way that student learning is enhanced. At the heart of a mentorship program is the students in the classrooms who are learning from the best trained teachers. Mentorship programs exist to support teachers by providing them with a cohort of colleagues who are dedicated to examining their practices continually so that students can learn to the best of their capabilities.

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Appendix A

Alberta Teachers' Association
Mentorship Program

Rationale for a Mentorship Program

- Supports a district's priority of ensuring high quality teaching, improved student achievement and staff well-being
- Provides a unique opportunity for experienced teachers to impart some of their knowledge, experience and wisdom to beginning teachers
- Recognizes teachers as a valued district resource
- Extends the range of new teacher initiatives available in districts
- Creates positive impact on attraction and retention of high-quality teaching staff
- Facilitates shared responsibility for career-long professional growth and development through collaboration of ATA locals, school district, regional professional development consortia and Alberta universities

Goals

- To enhance the ability of beginning teachers to develop and demonstrate the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard
- To enhance teaching practice and student learning
- To provide experienced teachers with opportunities for professional growth and leadership
- To extend opportunities for collegial sharing and reflective practice
- To promote the professional and personal well being of beginning teachers
- To accelerate the transmission of school and distinct culture

Overview of the Mentorship Program

The proposed program will provide selected pairs of mentors and proteges with opportunities for professional growth and development through collegial support, reflective practice and collaborative learning. Participants will define roles and describe goals and activities in a joint mentorship program plan. All proteges and mentors will participate in mini-conferences. The mini-conferences would focus on identified needs of beginning teachers including classroom management, instructional planning, school-based decision making, teacher professional growth plans, curricular issues, individual student needs in the classroom and student assessment. The mini-conferences should provide for individual choice among these topics.

Roles and Responsibilities

The mentorship program is offered as a service to beginning and experienced teachers. Successful implementation of the program requires commitment and support of jurisdiction players at all levels.

The district and the local are responsible to:

- promote the program in the district (information meeting for principals and interested experienced and beginning teachers)
- contribute financial resources to support the mentorship program
- identify criteria for selection of mentors
- deliver the following common program of events which make up the inservice component of the program:
  - orientation meeting for all participants, including principals;
  - mini–conference(s);
  - evaluation and wind-up session for all participants.
- match proteges and mentors
- evaluate the mentorship program.

Principals continue to have responsibility reviewing or approving individual professional growth plans for all staff and for evaluating beginning teachers.

Principals with staff involved in the program have a responsibility to:

- facilitate professional growth planning for the protege and mentor
- provide for common release time for the protege and mentor within either the instructional or non-instructional requirements of the collective agreement on a regular and ongoing basis
- recruit mentors who meet the identified criteria
- arrange costs for release time for the mentor and protege to participate in the program's large group sessions.

The responsibilities of mentors, once matched, are to:

- encourage and support the acculturation of the protege into the district
- prepare and implement a joint mentorship program plan with the protege
- maintain a relationship with the protege consistent with the Code of Professional Conduct
- demonstrate effective teaching strategies
- observe and provide feedback to the protege
- assist the protege in identifying personal strengths and planning for further professional growth
- assist the protege with curriculum and instructional planning.

The responsibilities of proteges, once matched, are to:

- prepare and implement a joint mentorship program plan with the mentor
- maintain a relationship with the mentor consistent with the Code of Professional Conduct.

In addition to these basic elements of the program, it is intended that additional skill training in mentoring is made available through inservices. The possibility of university credit can also be explored. The regional professional development consortia could be asked to facilitate portions of the program.

Recruitment, Selection and Matching Process

Each interested mentor will require nomination by the principal. The following criteria would be communicated to all potential mentors:

- Hold a continuing contract with the district and a permanent teaching certificate
- Demonstrate commitment to professional growth
- Evidence of successful teaching experience within the district
- Demonstrate a desire and willingness to participate in training and in professional development activities with a protege.

Appendix B

Mentorship Program
Initial Survey – Mentors

1. How did you become involved in the Mentorship Program?

☐ I volunteered
☐ My principal asked me to participate
☐ I heard the program through the ATA
☐ Other, please specify ____________

2. To what extent do you see the following as your role in the Mentorship Program? (SD =strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree; SA=strongly agree and NA=not applicable).

2.1 To increase the protege's instructional competence **SD D A SA**
2.2 To increase the protege's self- confidence **SD D A SA**

To be a resource to the protege in the areas of:

2.3 Classroom management **SD D A SA**
2.4 Curriculum **SD D A SA**
2.5 Lesson planning **SD D A SA**
2.6 Assessment **SD D A SA**
2.7 Student motivation **SD D A SA**
2.8 School policy, procedures and routines **SD D A SA**
2.9 To be a friend **SD D A SA**
2.10 Other, specify ____________

3. To what extent do you feel that the Mentorship Program will help you meet your expectations in the areas below: (SD =strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree; SA=strongly agree and NA=not applicable).

3.1 Allow you to grow professionally **SD D A SA**
3.2 Allow you to share your expertise as a colleague **SD D A SA**
3.3 Allow you to develop your skills in teacher collaboration **SD D A SA**
3.4 Allow you to refine your own teaching skills **SD D A SA**
3.5 Allow you to become a reflective practitioner **SD D A SA**
3.6 Other, please specify **SD D A SA**

4. From your experience as a teacher identify the five top areas of concern you expect beginning teachers on the Mentorship Program to have at the beginning of the school year. Rank these in order of priority with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

___ Special education programs
___ Ability to use technology
___ Too many extracurricular demands
___ Student assessment
___ Lack of resources
___ Diversity of special needs
___ Student motivation
___ Availability of technology
___ Classroom management and student discipline
___ Planning and organization
___ Dealing with parents
___ Too many teaching assignments
___ Other ________________

5. How long have you been teaching?

☐ 1-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-15 years
☐ 16-20 years
☐ 21-25 years
☐ 26-30 years
☐ over 30 years

6. Level of school you're in:

☐ Elementary
☐ Elementary/Junior High
☐ Junior High
☐ High School

Additional comments or expectations regarding the Mentorship Program: (Use reverse side if you need more space).

____
____
____

Thank You.

Appendix C

7

Mentorship Program
Initial Survey – Proteges

1. How did you become involved in the Mentorship Program?

☐ I volunteered
☐ My principal asked me to participate
☐ I heard about it through the ATA
☐ Other, please specify ____________

2. To what extent do you feel the Mentorship Program will help you develop the following skills? (SD =strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree and SA=strongly agree).

2.1 To increase your instructional competence	**SD D A SA**
2.2 To increase your self-confidence	**SD D A SA**
To develop your skills in the areas of:	
2.3 Classroom management	**SD D A SA**
2.4 Curriculum	**SD D A SA**
2.5 Lesson planning	**SD D A SA**
2.6 Assessment	**SD D A SA**
2.7 Student motivation	**SD D A SA**
2.8 School policy, procedures and routines	**SD D A SA**
2.9 Teacher collaboration	**SD D A SA**
2.10 Other, specify ____________	

Comments: ________________

3. Please examine the following list that reflects some of the concerns that teachers face in their work. Please rank the five (5) areas of greatest concern to you with "1" being the "most important" and "5" being the "least important".

___ Special education programs
___ Ability to use technology
___ Extra-curricular involvement
___ Student assessment
___ Lack of resources
___ Diversity of special needs
___ Student motivation
___ Availability of technology
___ Classroom management
___ Planning and organization
___ Dealing with parents
___ Other, specify ________________

Comments: ________________

4. How many years of teaching experience did you have prior to being part of the Mentorship Program?

_____ (years)

5. How many years of teaching experience did you have with another school district prior to joining this school district?

_____ (years)

6. Do you have any other teaching experiences such as teaching abroad? If yes, specify.

____

7. What type of school are you in?

☐ Elementary
☐ Elementary/Junior High
☐ Junior High
☐ High School

8. In what ways do you feel the Mentorship Program will be most helpful to you?

____
____
____
____

Additional comments or expectations regarding the Mentorship Program: (Use reverse side if you need more space).

____
____
____
____
____

Thank You.

Appendix D

Mentorship Program
Follow-up Survey – Mentors

1. In what ways do you feel the Mentorship Program is most helpful for you and your protege?

____
____
____
____

2. To what extent did you see the following as your role in the Mentorship Program? (SD =strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree and SA=strongly agree).

2.1 To increase the protege's instructional competence	**SD D A SA**
2.2 To increase the protege's self-confidence	**SD D A SA**
To be a resource to the proteges in the areas of:	
2.3 Classroom management	**SD D A SA**
2.4 Curriculum	**SD D A SA**
2.5 Lesson Planning	**SD D A SA**
2.6 Assessment	**SD D A SA**
2.7 Student Motivation	**SD D A SA**
2.8 School policy, procedures and routines	**SD D A SA**
2.9 To be a friend	**SD D A SA**
2.10 Other, specify ________________	

Comments: ________________

3. To what extent did you feel that the Mentorship Program helped you meet your expectations in the areas below: (SD =strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree and SA=strongly agree)

3.1 Allow you to grow professionally	**SD D A SA**
3.2 Allow you to share your expertise as a colleague	**SD D A SA**
3.3 Allow you to develop your skills in teacher collaboration	**SD D A SA**
3.4 Allow you to refine your own teaching skills	**SD D A SA**
3.5 Allow you to become a reflective practitioner	**SD D A SA**

3.6 Other, please specify ______________

Comments: ____________________

4. How long have you been teaching?
_____ (years)

5. What type of school are you in?

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ Elementary/Junior High
- ☐ Junior High
- ☐ High School

6. As a mentor, how have you been most helpful to your protege?

____
____
____

7. What changes, if any, would you recommend to improve the Mentorship Program?

____
____
____

8. Would you recommend the Mentorship Program be continued next year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Why or why not? ____________________
____
____

Additional comments or expectations regarding the Mentorship Program: (Use reverse side if you need more space).

____
____
____
____

Thank You

Appendix E

Mentorship Program

Follow-up Survey – Proteges

1. In what ways do you feel the Mentorship Program is most helpful for you and your mentor?

____

____

____

2. To what extent do you feel the Mentorship Program helped you develop the following skills? (SD =strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree and SA=strongly agree).

2.1 To increase your instructional competence	**SD D A SA**
2.2 To increase your self-confidence	**SD D A SA**
To develop your skills in the areas of:	
2.3 Classroom management	**SD D A SA**
2.4 Curriculum	**SD D A SA**
2.5 Lesson Planning	**SD D A SA**
2.6 Assessment	**SD D A SA**
2.7 Student Motivation	**SD D A SA**
2.8 School policy, procedures and routines	**SD D A SA**
2.9 Teacher collaboration	**SD D A SA**

2.10 Other, specify ____________________

Comments: ____________________

3. Please rank the five (5) areas of greatest challenge to you in your teaching with "1" being the "most challenging" and "5" being the "least challenging".

___ Special education programs
___ Ability to use technology
___ Extra-curricular involvement
___ Student assessment
___ Lack of resources
___ Diversity of special needs
___ Student motivation
___ Availability of technology
___ Classroom management
___ Planning and organization
___ Dealing with parents

___ Other, specify ____________________

Comments: ____________________

4. How many years of teaching experience did you have prior to being part of the Mentorship Program?

_____ (years)

5. In what content areas do you teach?

☐ All subjects
☐ Specific subjects, please list ___________

____

6. How many students are enrolled in your school? ___________

7. What type of school are you in?

☐ Elementary
☐ Elementary/Junior High
☐ Junior High
☐ High School

8. In what ways do you feel that your mentor is most helpful to you?

____

____

____

9. What changes, if any, would you recommend to improve the Mentorship Program?

____

____

____

10. Would you recommend that the Mentorship Program be continued next year?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Why or why not? ____________________

____

Additional comments or expectations regarding the Mentorship Program: (Use reverse side if you need more space).

____

____

____

____

Thank You.

Appendix F

Mentorship Program

Interview Questions (Proteges)

1. What has it been like to be part of the Mentorship Program?
2. What was the best part of the Mentorship Program?
3. Describe some of your successes in the Mentorship Program.
4. What would you have added to the Mentorship Program to make it more meaningful for you?
5. What would you have deleted from the Mentorship Program in order to make it more effective for you?
6. In what areas do you feel that beginning teachers need the most help?
7. If you were giving advice to a protege next year, what would tell him or her about the roles and responsibilities of a protege?
8. What personal and professional criteria should be used to select mentors?
9. What is the role of a principal in a Mentorship Program?
10. Based on your experiences in the Mentorship Program, would you recommend that the Mentorship Program be continued in the future? Why or why not?
11. Your questions/comments.

Mentorship Program

Interview Questions (Mentors)

1. What has it been like to be part of the Mentorship Program?
2. What was the best part of the Mentorship Program?
3. Has the Mentorship Program changed your perceptions of what first year teachers need for support in their new job? If so, how?
4. From your experiences, what kinds of supports and activities do first year teachers need the most?
5. What would you like to see included in the Mentorship Program to make it more useful for you and your protege?
6. What changes would you make to the Mentorship Program in order to make it more meaningful for mentors and proteges?
7. What impact do you think the Mentorship Program has on first year teachers?
8. If you were advising a mentor at the beginning of next year, what would you tell him or her about the role and expectations of a mentor?
9. What criteria should be used to select mentors for a Mentorship Program?
10. What is the role of the principal in a Mentorship Program?
11. Based on your experiences in the Mentorship Program, would you participate in the Mentorship Program again in the future? Why or why not?
12. Your questions/comments.

Mentorship Program

Interview Questions (Principals)

1. What were your expectations of the Mentorship Program?

2. In your opinion, what are the advantages of having a Mentorship Program for beginning teachers?

3. In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of having a Mentorship Program for beginning teachers?

4. What effect did the Mentorship Program have on your school?

5. What changes would you suggest to make the Mentorship Program more effective for mentors and proteges?

5. From your experiences, in what areas do you think first year teachers need the most assistance in meeting the challenges of their job?

6. What criteria should be used to select mentors for a Mentorship Program?

7. If you were giving advice to a principal about the Mentorship Program, what would you tell him or her about the role of a principal in the program?

8. Based on your understanding of mentorship, do you feel that the Mentorship Program should be continued in the future? Why or why not?

9. Your questions/comments.

Appendix G

Fall, 1998

Dear Colleague:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta presently on professional leave from my school district. I am gathering data on the perceived effectiveness of the Mentorship Program for beginning teachers. Specifically, I am interested in whether the Mentorship Program contributes to the professional development and satisfaction of first year teachers.

I believe that my study will help to shed light on the needs of beginning teachers in their first year on a continuous contract. I am using the study to meet the requirements of an Ed.D. degree.

Since you are either a protege (beginning teacher), a mentor (experienced teacher), or a principal in a school where there is a beginning teacher, I would be grateful if you would participate in the program evaluation of the Mentorship Program.

Data gathering on the Mentorship Program will be in several forms. There will be an initial survey done at the beginning of the program for the program participants. All program participants will be asked to complete a survey that captures participant expectations of the program. Midway through the program, several proteges, mentors and principals will be selected for participation in an interview. A second survey will be administered at the completion of the Mentorship Program to determine the extent to which the program contributed to the professional growth and satisfaction of first year teachers as viewed by all participants. A number of beginning teachers who are not participating in the Mentorship Program and their principals will also be surveyed near the end of the school year in the spring of 1999 in order to gather comparative data on the experiences of those first year teachers. Respondents are assured that all data will be treated confidentially.

This study has been approved by the Department of Elementary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. Permission has been obtained from the participating school district to distribute the surveys and conduct the interviews.

The results of this study will be shared in the district and will be available from the Teachers' Professional Library at the participating school district and the University of Alberta at the completion of the study. If you have any questions about this study or any items in the survey or interview, please feel free to call me at the University of Alberta (492-4273 ext. 258) or at home (430-6926). Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Sandy Sawchuk

Appendix H

Consent Form

Participant's Name:___________________________________

I agree to participate in the research study concerning the **Mentorship Program** conducted by Sandy Sawchuk in the 1998-99 school year. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time for any reason. I also understand that all data gathered as part of the research study will be considered confidential and that neither I nor my school will be identified in any publications or presentation resulting from the research. All data gathered for this study will be destroyed after the results are published in the thesis and the researcher has convocated. The results may be shared in the form of a workshop or journal article as well. If I am part of the group interviewed, I will have the opportunity to review and amend the transcribed tapes.

Date: ____________________ Signature: ____________________

Please complete and sign the above form if you are prepared to give consent to participate in the above study. Please return the completed form and send it to Sandy Sawchuk in the self addressed envelope you have been provided. Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix I

June 25, 1999

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for meeting with me in February when I interviewed you on your perceptions of the Mentorship Project. I am enclosing notes that I made from the tape recording of our conversation. I have organized the content of the conversation into key points that I have extracted from the tape recording. Please review what I have summarized to confirm its accuracy. If you feel any part of what I have summarized does not reflect what you said, please call me at 430-6926. If I don't hear from you by July 15, 1999, I will assume that everything is fine.

Thank you again for the time you spent with me.

Sincerely,

Sandy Sawchuk

Appendix J

Spring, 1999

Dear Colleague,

In the fall of this school year, I surveyed all the participants in the Mentorship Program by distributing an initial survey in which I asked for input on the extent to which the Mentorship Program contributes to the professional growth and satisfaction of beginning teachers. As I had indicated at that time, I am a graduate student on professional leave and am completing the requirements for an Ed.D. degree at the University of Alberta. I am now in the process of distributing the follow up survey in order to complete the process of gathering data. To date, I have also completed a sample of interviews with mentors, proteges and principals.

To help in collecting this information about the Mentorship Program, please complete the enclosed follow up survey. If you did not complete a consent form in the first round of data gathering, a consent form is enclosed for you to complete. To ensure anonymity of your responses, two self-addressed envelopes are enclosed in this package. Send your completed survey in one envelope and the signed consent form in the other self addressed envelope. Please send your completed survey and consent form to The Mentorship Program, c/o Adrienne Coull, Budget Services, Centre For Education by **June 14, 1999**.

The results of this study will be shared in the fall of 1999 during the second year of the mentorship program in the district. They will also be available at the University of Alberta at the completion of the study. Thank you for your help in completing this survey. I appreciate your generosity in sharing your time and insights.

Sincerely yours,

Sandy Sawchuk